

By Reginald Boswell

The WHOLE TRUTH

Church of God in Christ

PURPOSED TO INSPIRE AND INFORM COGIC READERS AND CHRISTIANS EVERYWHERE

Since 1895

The Whole Truth Is Published Four Times A Year

April 2016

2016
WOMEN'S
INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION/
CRUSADE
RETURNS
to the
MOTOR CITY
By Leonitta Turner

COGIC's
150+
INFLUENTIAL Women

RECAP of 150
INFLUENTIAL WOMEN
AWARDS CEREMONY
By Queen E. Phillips

20 15

Men's Conference:
IRON SHARPENS IRON
By Elder Rick D. Cunningham

MASS INCARCERATION
By Bishop Talbert W. Swan II

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Volume 121, Number 1



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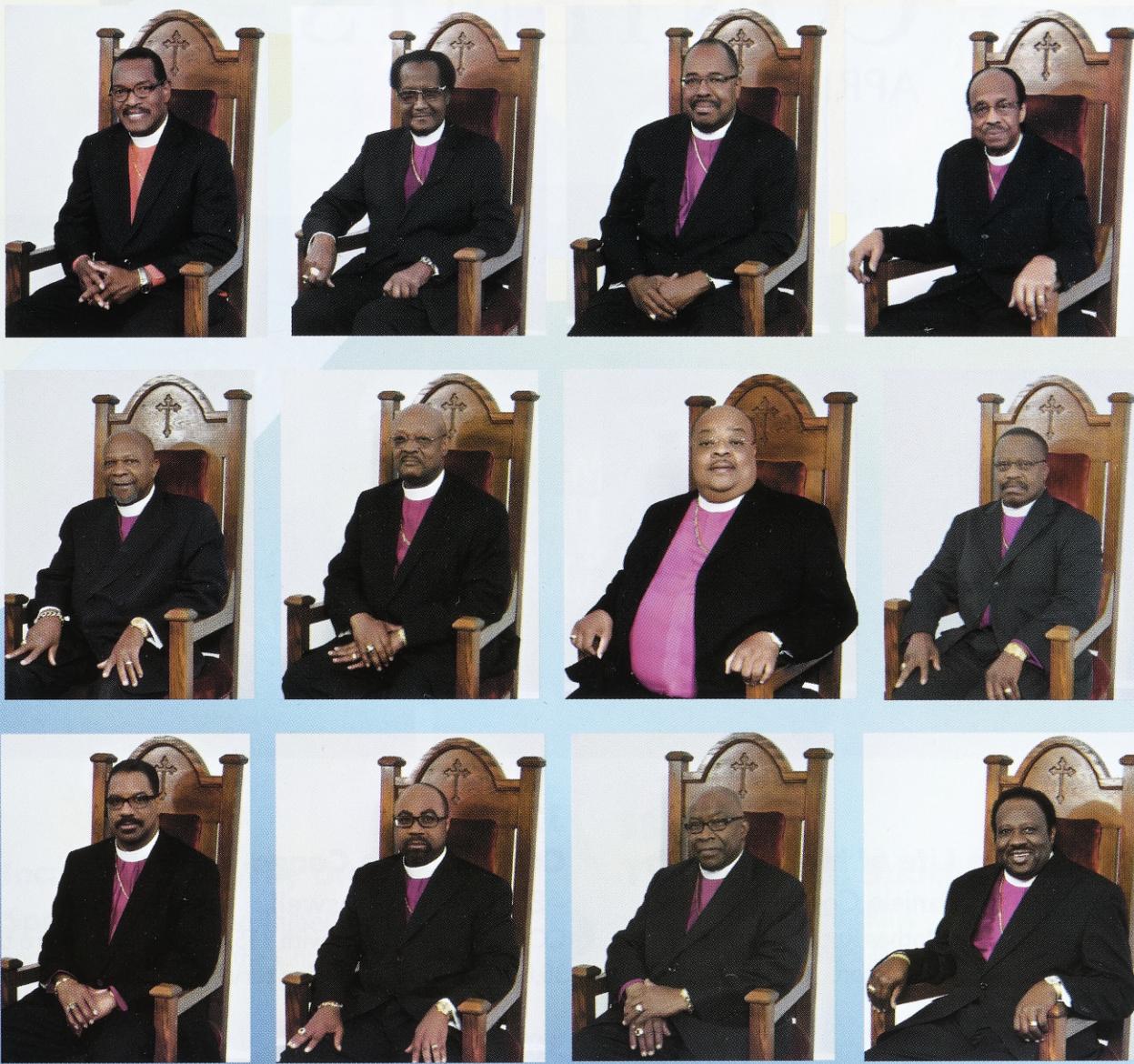
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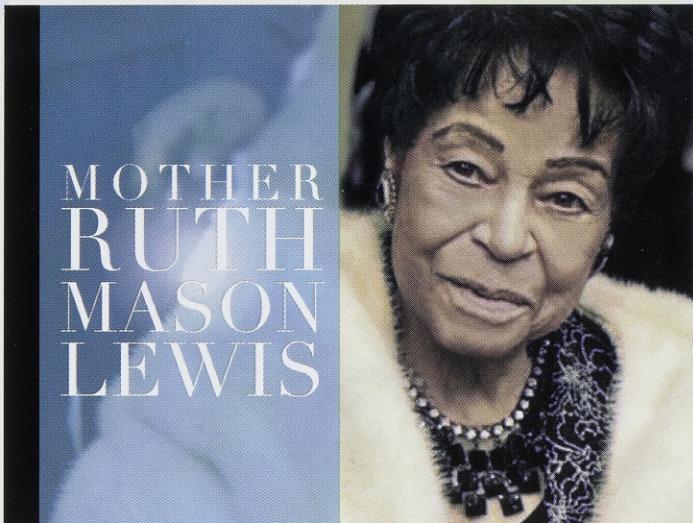
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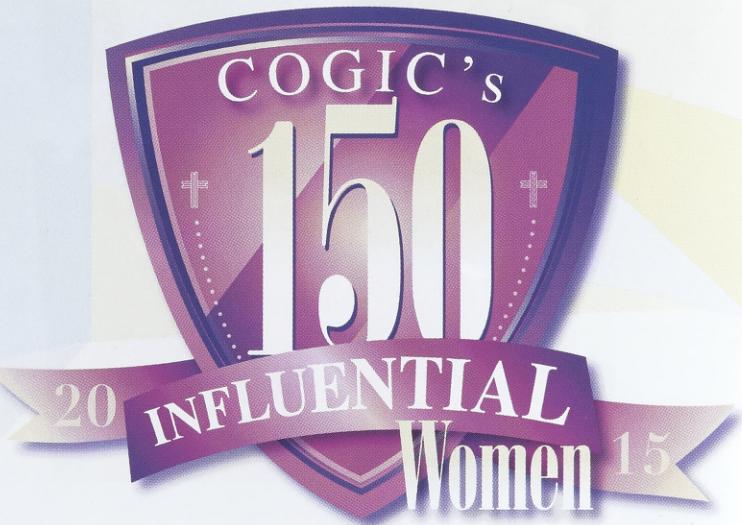


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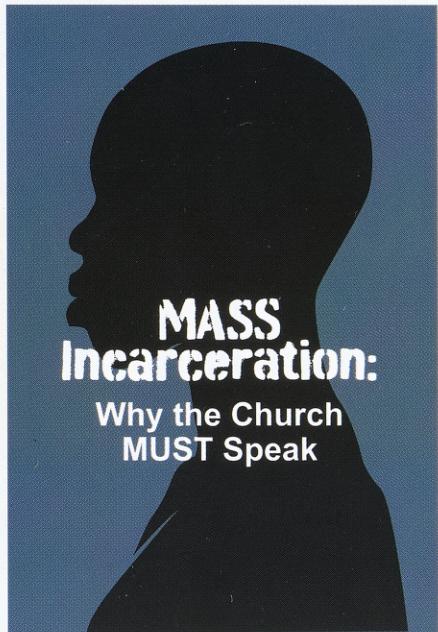
Platform – By Evangelist DeLisa Reed

New online registration system a great start to an awesome convention experience.

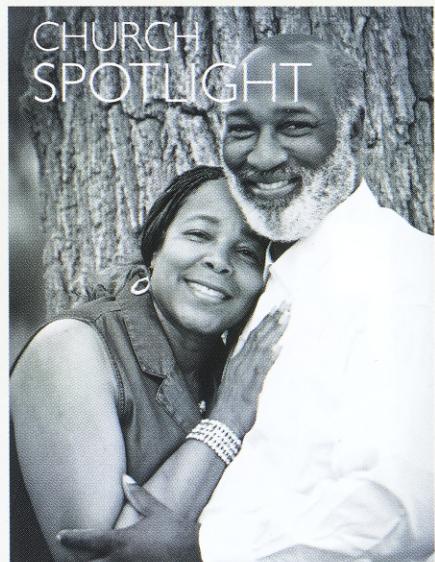
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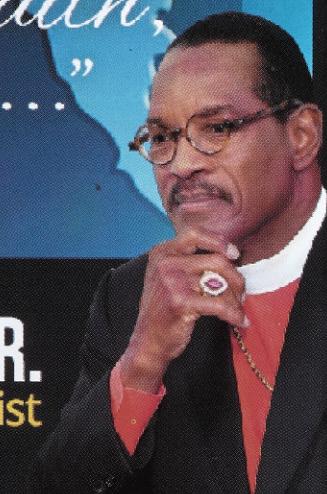
FIGHTING *for*
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RIGHTEOUSNESS
IN A VIOLENT AND IMMORAL WORLD

I TIMOTHY 6:12

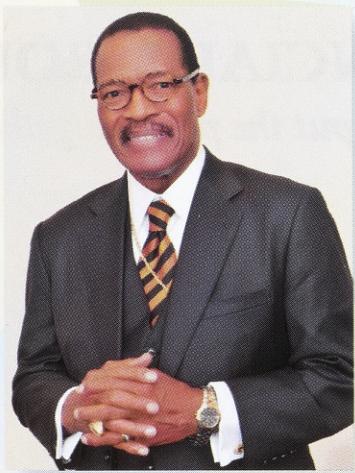
*"Fight the good fight of faith,
lay hold on eternal life..."*



BISHOP CHARLES E. BLAKE, SR.
Presiding Bishop - Church Of God In Christ



From The Desk of Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.



"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

—1 Timothy 6:12 NIV

Greetings Dear Readers:

I pray that this salutation finds each of you blessed and in good health as we quickly approach yet another spring season. I also pray that you have resolved to assist me in carrying out our theme for 2016: "Fighting for salvation and righteousness in a violent and immoral world." Together, we must remain steadfast and in a consistent state of spiritual training and conditioning, in order to "fight the good fight" to which Timothy so boldly referred. If we are to be victorious, as the Lord promises we shall be, we will need to remain strong in Him, never growing weary in well doing.

With each changing season comes an exciting time of refreshing, restoration and an expectation of greater things to come. What great things are you EXPECTING from the Lord today? I encourage you to have a fresh, renewed perspective and expect to receive all of the great things that God has in store for His people.

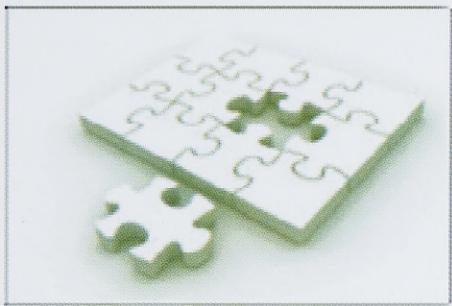
We are so appreciative of your faithfulness to the Church of God in Christ through your continued support of *The Whole Truth* magazine. It is always our prayer that your hearts will be encouraged and your minds renewed with each issue. We strive to provide the tools that will not only assist you in running this race, but enduring it until the very end.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles E. Blake".

Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.
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LETTER from the EDITOR



Welcome to Our First Issue of 2016!

Dear Readers:

We are delighted to be able to continue serving the Lord's people through the journalistic medium of *The Whole Truth* magazine. Consequently, thank you for still being with us and supporting the Church of God in Christ's premiere urban Christian magazine. We appreciate all of the positive feedback periodically received from our readers and pray that we can continue to be a great source of inspiration and information to the Body of Christ.

I, along with *The Whole Truth*'s managing editor, Robert E. Coleman, would also like to extend a very appreciative THANK YOU to our cohort of writers who continue to avail themselves to the work of this ministry: Missionary Charea Batiste, Daniele Cooper, Elder David-George Newsome, Evangelist DeLisa Reed, Leonitta Turner, Marion McNair, Monique Eaddy, Evangelist-Missionary Queen Phillips, Reginald Boswell, Elder Rick Cunningham, Missionary Sandra Thompson Williams, Sonya Bradford, Dr. Kyle Huckins and Dr. Valerie Ross. *The Whole Truth* is successful because of their efforts and desire to be a blessing to our readers. Issue after issue, these writers collectively contribute genuine, relevant material that is elevating and life-changing. Thanks to our writers for their sacrifice and commitment to the magazine and to the work of the Lord.

In this edition, you can look forward to a thorough recap of the 2015 Holy Convocation, as well as a great review of COGIC's very first and very successful *150 Influential Women* awards ceremony and reception. You can get a global perspective of COGIC in the African region of the CONGO, along with overviews of the upcoming National Men's Conference and the highly anticipated 66th Women's International Conference/Crusade.

As always, we invite you to delve in and we pray that you are revitalized by this issue. May the spring bring abundant blessings to you and yours!

By His Grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "April Q." or "April E. Quillen".

April E. Quillen

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Church of God in Christ

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"Good News For God's People-The Whole Truth"

The Whole Truth predates the Church Of God In Christ as a Pentecostal Church. Bishop Charles Harrison Mason founded the newspaper entitled "Truth" in the late 1890's. The goal of the newspaper then, just as the goal of the eMagazine now, is to inspire and to inform.

The Whole Truth remains the official organ of the Church, is serving in an expanded role and has a great legacy. Today, as an eMagazine, its pages are here to record, for current readers and generations to come, what the Church Of God In Christ is doing.

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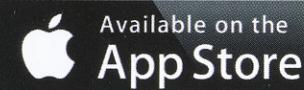
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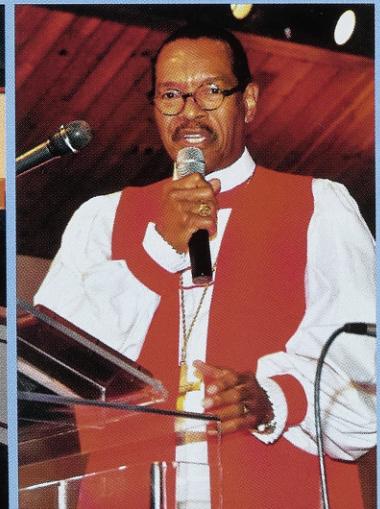
The
**WHOLE
TRUTH**
Church of God in Christ

SALUTES the
LIFE of
**MOTHER
RUTH
MASON
LEWIS**

By Daniele Cooper



On November 28, 2015, the heavens greeted Mother Ruth Pheineese Mason Lewis as she transitioned from her natural body into a heavenly being. Born on September 16, 1920 in Memphis, TN, Mother Lewis was the eighth of nine children of Church Of God In Christ founder, Bishop Charles Harrison Mason. Always encouraging, inspiring, and influencing the lives of others, Mother Lewis was involved with many entities that positively impacted her family, friends, church family and community.



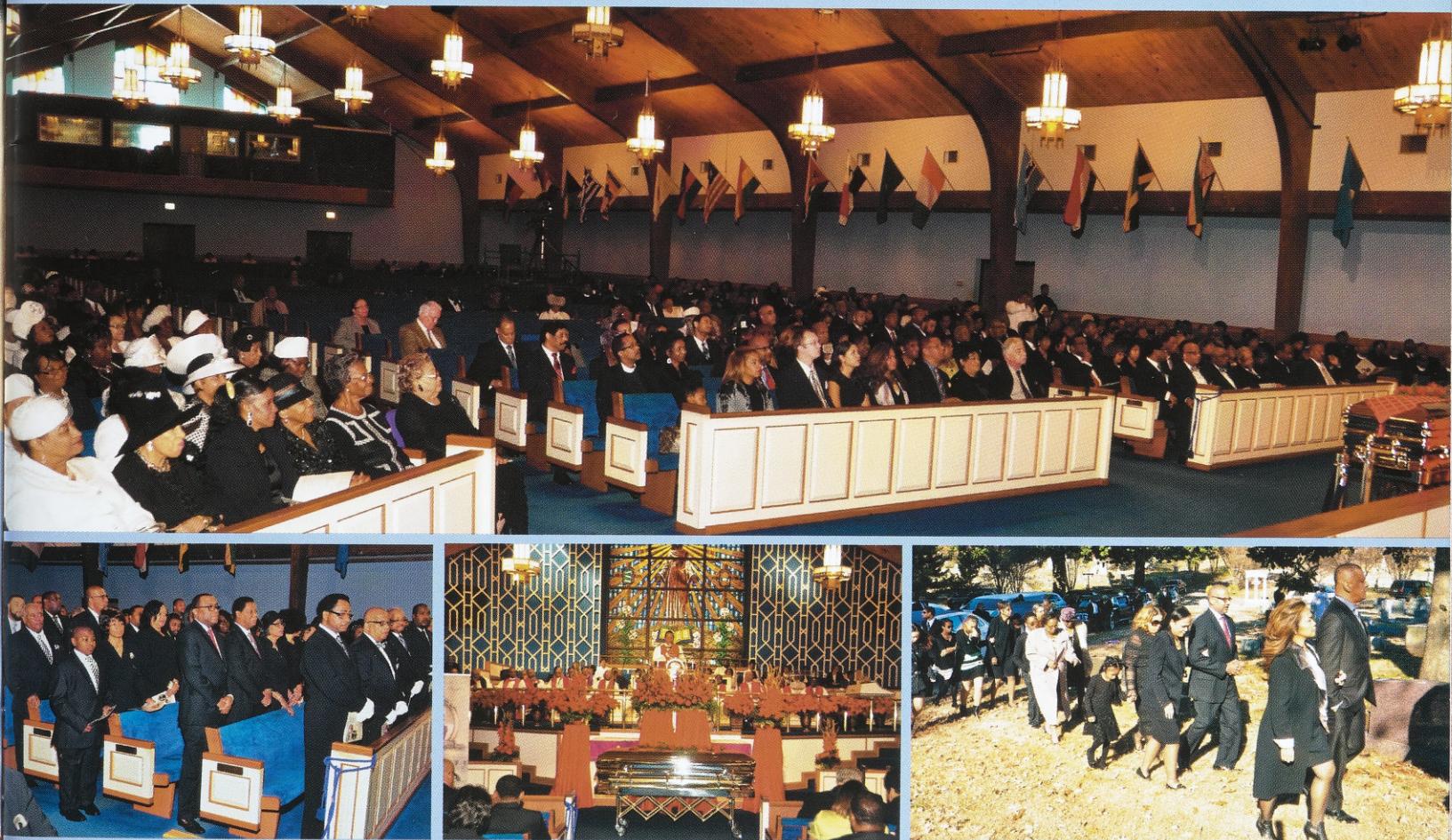
Attending Booker T. Washington High School in Tennessee, Mother Lewis was an honor student and a drum majorette. Taking her educational goals to a higher level, Mother Lewis attended West Virginia State College Institute where she received a bachelor's degree in Home Economics. Mother Lewis also received her master's degree at the Ohio State University and pursued post-graduate studies at Wayne State University and the University of Chicago.

In 1947, Robert Lewis, Jr., whose family owned and operated the R.S. Lewis and Sons Funeral Home, took the hand of Ruth Mason in marriage. Friends since their time at Booker T.

Mother Lewis was also an inspiration to her family and friends through interior design, dinner parties, and by imparting wisdom to all individuals blessed to be in her company.

Mother Lewis served on the Board of Directors of the Charles H. Mason Foundation, was a member of Links, Inc., the National Smart Set, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. In 2013, Mother Lewis' nephew, Bishop Charles Patterson of Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ, appointed his aunt to the Mother's Board of the Church of God In Christ.

A major part of the history of the Church of God In Christ, Mother Lewis leaves a beautiful



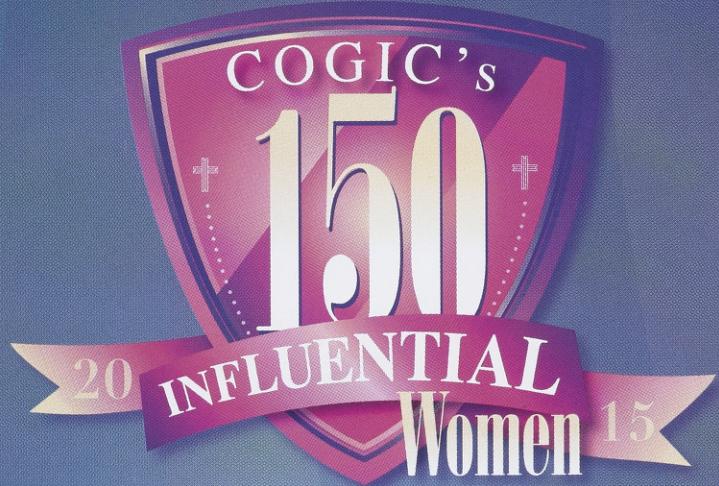
Washington High School, the power couple was married for 64 years and had two children: Dr. Sharon Lewis Rouse and the late Robert S. Lewis III.

A beloved mother to her two children and a beacon of light to countless others, Mother Lewis used her education in the field of Nutrition to inspire healthy eating habits in the city of Tennessee. She served as a nutritionist for the Shelby County Head Start Program and sent home monthly menus that would empower a healthy family lifestyle.

legacy of how to live a life of true Christianity. The Whole Truth magazine exuberantly salutes Mother Ruth Mason Lewis for a life of servitude and commitment to the Kingdom of God.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, KJV).

R E C A P
of



Award Reception

By Queen E. Phillips



Award Recipients



The atmosphere in the ballroom of the America's Center permeated with excitement, elegance and eclectic style that is well-known among Church of God in Christ women. COGIC's 2015 *150 Influential Women* award reception, hosted by *The Whole Truth* magazine and Church of God In Christ Publishing House, was indeed a historic occasion and the first of its kind. At seating capacity with over 600 in attendance on Thursday, November 5th, the event was one of the most coveted to attend during the 108th Holy Convocation.

"It all began with an idea I presented to *The Whole Truth* staff. I never imagined it would result in this level of enthusiasm and receptivity," admitted Robert E. Coleman, Jr., Church of God In Christ Public Relations director and managing editor for *The Whole Truth*.

The many shades of purple worn by honorees added a touch of royalty to the setting. Invited guests, family and friends gathered to honor and celebrate 150 women nominated and selected as deserving of recognition for their dedication to the Kingdom of God, through the sacrifice of time and efforts, and for their ability to positively influence their local churches, districts, jurisdictions, communities and families by setting, maintaining and raising the standard based on the Word of God. In addition to the 150 women nominated and selected was another phenomenal group of women, whose international leadership roles influence women

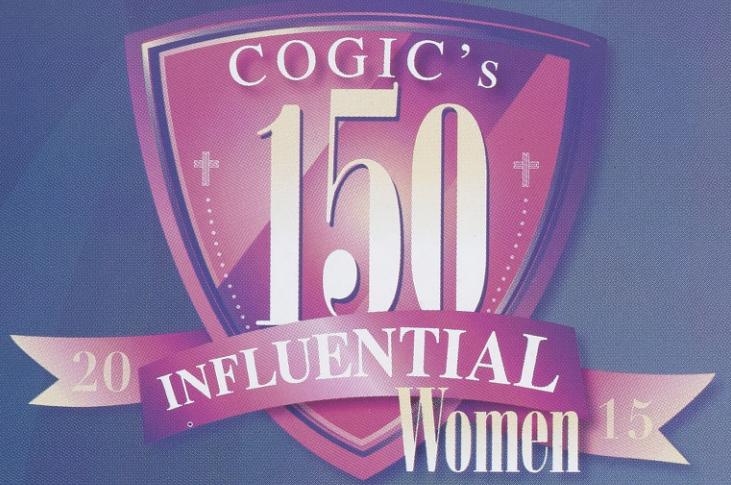
within COGIC and across denominational lines. Among those recognized was Lady Mae Lawrence Blake, General Board wives, Mother Willie Mae Rivers, Mother Barbara McCoo Lewis and the wives of elected officials.

The program was expedited by Lady Barbara McKinney (wife of Bishop George Dallas McKinney, General Board member). A special highlight featured Elder Gregg Haynes & "The Happy Guitar." Dr. Monica G. Williams-Davis, managing director of Community Partnerships for the United States Fund for UNICEF was the keynote speaker. Her presentation was informative and enlightening as she expressed thanks and appreciation to the Church of God In Christ, Inc. for partnering with UNICEF to "put children first."

Superintendent Mark Ellis, chairman of the Church of God In Christ Publishing House, Robert E. Coleman, Jr. and April Quillen, TWT editor presented honorees with gift bags and a complimentary special issue of *The Whole Truth* in which they were honored.

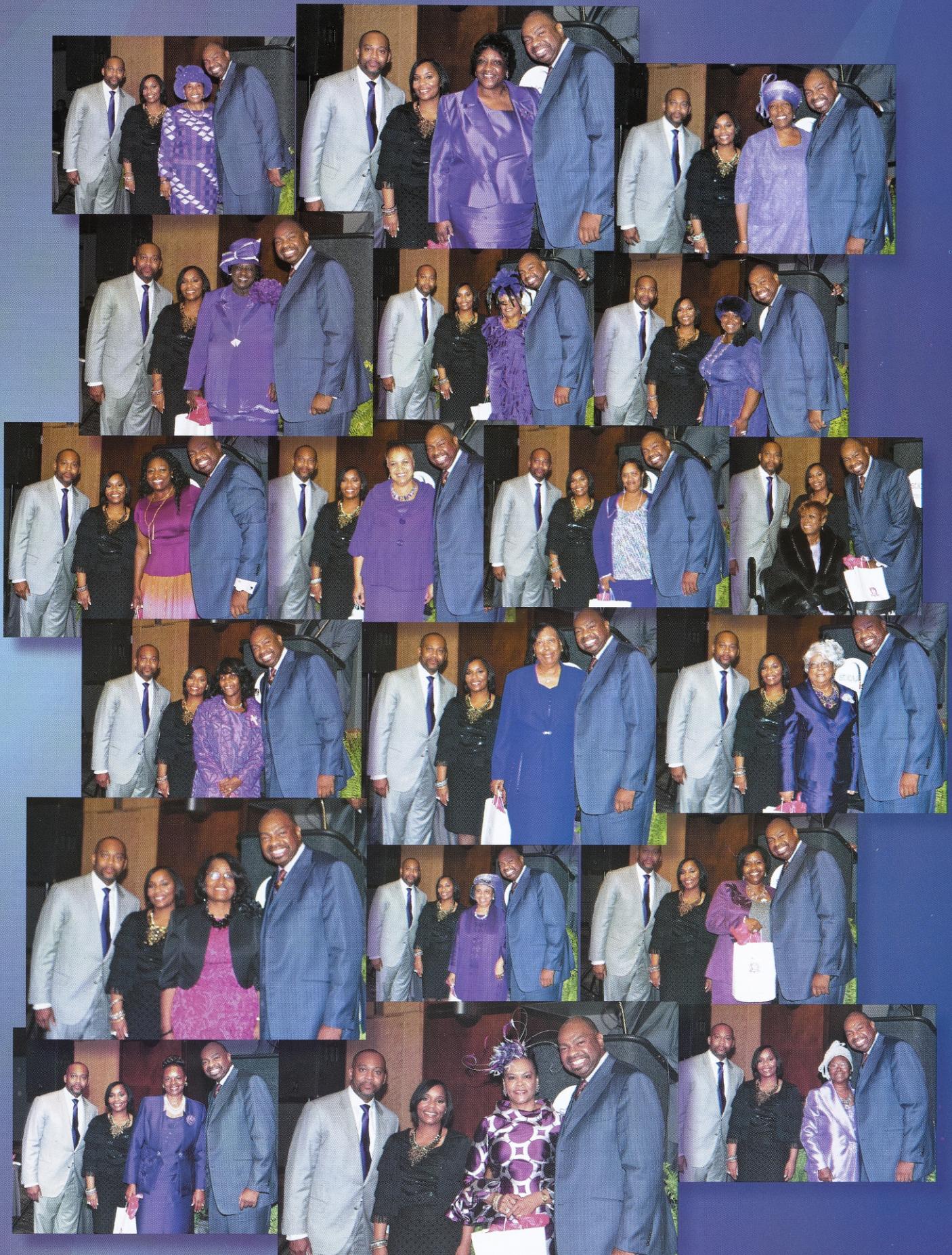
TWT

Queen E. Phillips is a published author, licensed evangelist missionary and ministry leader at Mt. Rose Church, City of Refuge under the leadership of Dr. Ron Eagleton, senior pastor. Email: queenephillips@gmail.com.



Award Recipients



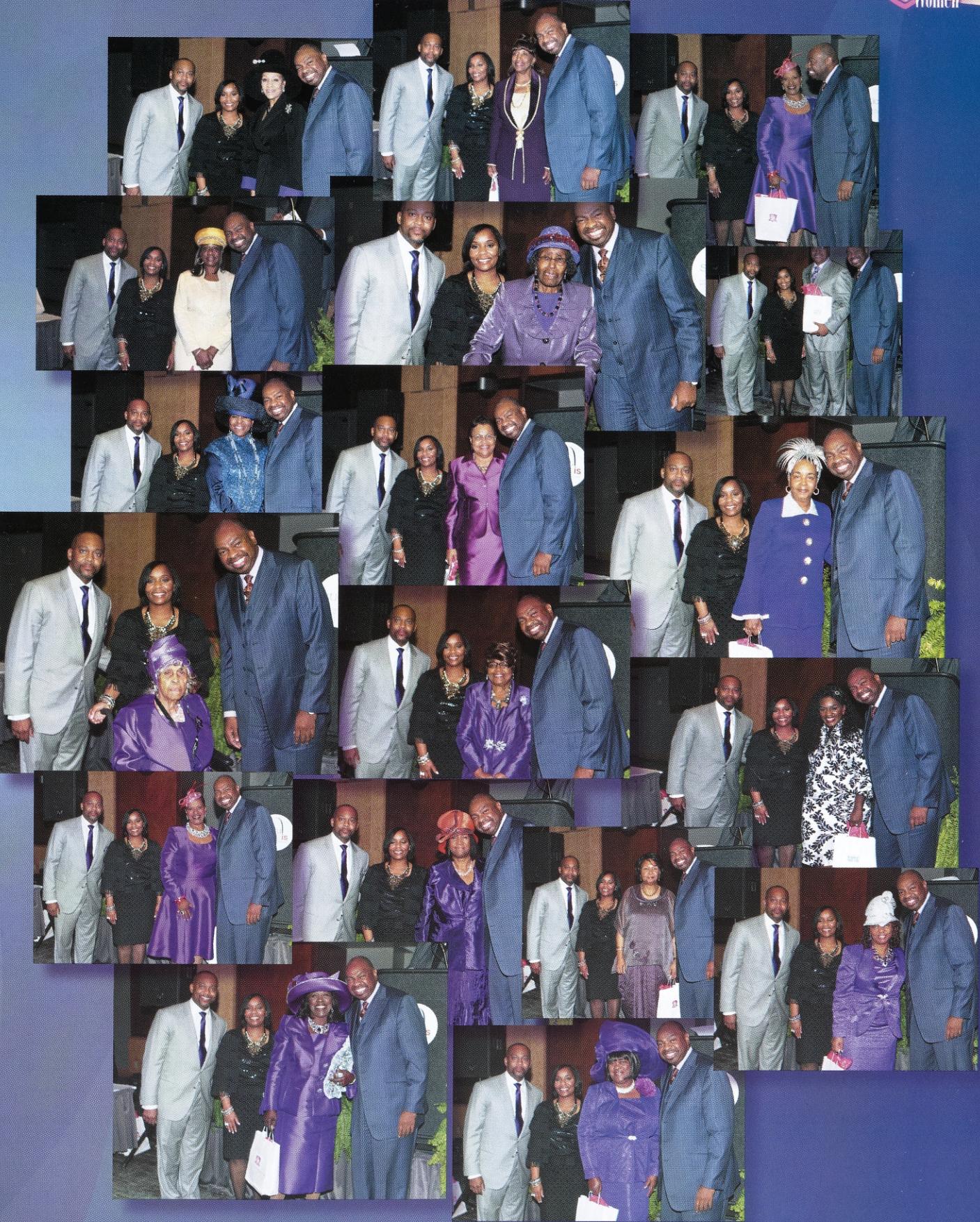




Award Recipients



Award Recipients



A Pastoral Statement *on the*

CRISIS in FLINT MICHIGAN

and

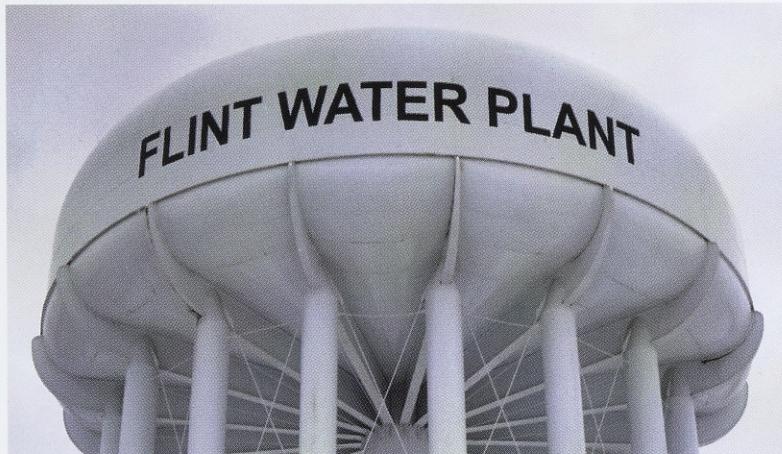
The Challenge of Environmental Racism



Bishop Charles E. Blake
Presiding Bishop
Church of God in Christ



Jesus Christ, our Lord and the model for our lives, showed special concern for the weak and the defenseless. He commanded us, the church, to do the same: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40). In view of this charge, the leadership of the Church of God in Christ cannot stand silent as the innocent children of Flint, MI and their parents suffer the ravages of poi-



sonous water. We stand with these parents, and with all the residents of Flint, to call for the speedy, permanent restoration of clean drinking water. Governor Snyder and the state of Michigan are largely responsible for the terrible disaster in Flint. An emergency manager, Ed Kurtz, appointed by the governor, made the initial decision to switch the city's water supply from Detroit and Lake Huron to the Flint





River. The decision was made despite years of waste being pumped into the Flint River by industries based in Flint. Furthermore, another emergency manager, Jerry Ambrose, overrode the city council's decision to stop using water from the Flint River eleven months after the water supply was switched from Lake Huron. Mr. Ambrose made this decision despite residents' many complaints about illness and rashes, as well as reports of bad odors and discoloration of the water. He made this decision despite the fact that five months earlier General Motors had announced that it would no longer use municipal water because it was so corrosive that it was damaging engine parts. Furthermore, behind the scenes warnings from the Environmental Protection Agency that lead levels in the Flint water supply were dangerously high were ignored by the state's Department of Environmental Quality. However, it took a Virginia Tech report to confirm the astronomical lead levels in Flint's water before the state would act. It took a finding from the Hurley Medical Center that twice as many children in Flint had elevated lead levels than before the city switched its water supply, for the state to finally restore water from Lake Huron to Flint's pipes.

It is deplorable that Governor Snyder, his chief of staff and his emergency managers acted with such callous indifference to the needs of

Flint's residents. It is striking that the voices of mothers and the needs of children did little to move these servants of the people to action. In light of what the New York Times refers to as "depraved indifference," how can we overlook the fact that over half the population of Flint is black? And almost half the population is below the poverty line. Although neither race nor poverty was mentioned by Governor Snyder in his apology, it is undeniable that black people and poor people are overwhelmingly the ones devastated by the actions of officials in Michigan.

Governor Snyder's extremely belated apology will appear to be little more than a political ploy if it is not accompanied by strong and swift action. The state's lack of action has resulted in overwhelming damage to Flint's pipes, and in the seepage of lead. It is therefore expected that the entire piping system will need to be replaced. It is not clear how the danger to Flint's residents will be resolved, or how soon it will happen.

One estimate is that it will cost over one billion dollars. So far, much of the funds, six million dollars, to restore water from Lake Huron to the city have come from the city of Flint and from private foundations. Governor Snyder has requested a mere twenty-eight million dollars from the Michigan legislature to address the problem. The state



will need to do much more, drawing on nearly six million dollars in budget surpluses this year and another six million in rainy day funds. This is only just, given the damage caused by the state's actions to the city, to the residents, and to the children of Flint.

The Environmental Protection Agency also failed to protect the people of Flint. Despite warnings from one of its employees about elevated lead levels, requests for action from the mayor of Flint were ignored. The federal government must also be held accountable for its responsibility for the disaster. President Obama has declared a state of emergency which will make up to five million dollars available. We call on the federal government to follow through on an additional aid package of \$80 million pledged by the President. It is appropriate that the regional director of the Environmental Protection Agency has stepped down as a result of the agency's lack of action. The federal government must do all it can to assist the people of Flint in the middle of this crisis.

As the people of God, Christians must do more than call for justice for the poor. We must also act to support them as Jesus did, feeding the hungry and healing the sick. Already, churches in the Church of God in Christ and many other denominations, in Michigan and across the country, are distributing bottled water, ready-made infant formula, water filters and water test kits. We must continue our efforts to help in every practical way possible by:



children for lead poisoning and other residents for other health consequences;

- Working to help those who have been injured by the poisoned water;



• Giving financial support to organizations providing critical public health services, such as the Flint Child Health and Development Fund;

• Making donations to the Flint Water Study at Virginia Tech and to researchers who are keeping the public informed;

• Advocating for swift action by Governor Snyder and the Michigan legislature to address the long term problems of the Flint water supply and of the general economic decline in the city;

• Based on the lessons of Flint, churches must begin to engage the political and structural sources of environmental racism in poor black communities.

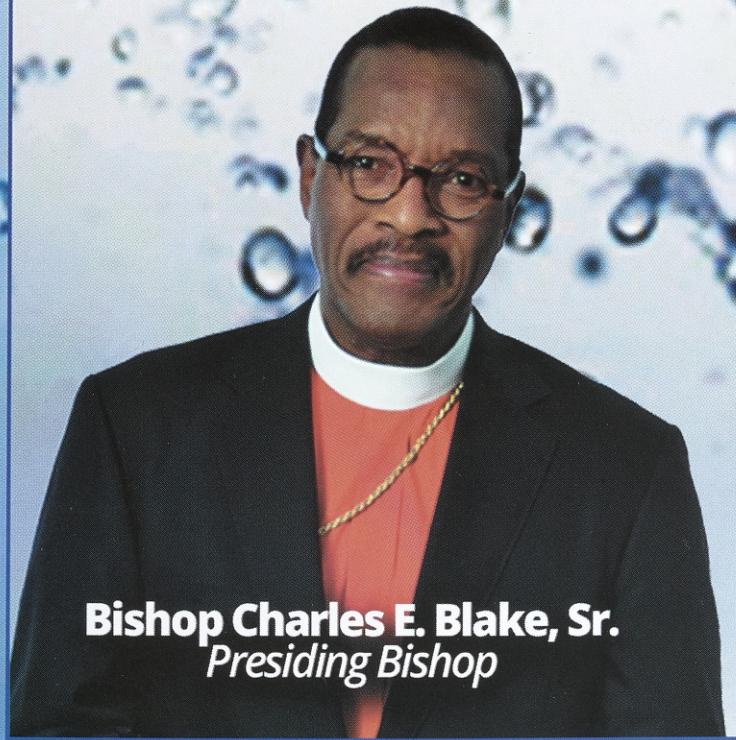
As we serve in these ways, we will witness the power of the Risen Christ by our love. **TWT**



WATER FOR FLINT

COGIC Charities will be distributing water and ready-made baby formula to the residents of Flint, Michigan at the following locations until supplies are depleted.

"If you want to help COGIC Charities make a difference in Flint, go to www.cogic.org to make a donation."



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Presiding Bishop

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Bishop Roger L. Jones Pastor
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Pastor Gene Buggs
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Faith Temple COGIC

Pastor Eric Lewis
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Born Again Ministries COGIC

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Flint, MI 48506

New Jerusalem COGIC

Pastor Anthony Newell
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Lady Sherry Johnson

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follow you and strengthen you all the days of Your Life.

Superintendent Bernell Hoyle, Pastor
Missionary Alma Hoyle, First Lady



2016 MEN'S CONFERENCE:



By Elder Rick D. Cunningham

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

—Proverbs 27:17

Imagine, if you will, the vision of thousands of Holy Ghost filled men under one roof and on one accord. Men who have come together united through the power of God. Men sharing experiences that will help each other fulfill their roles as the backbone of their homes, churches and communities. A gathering of strong men from throughout the United States and abroad to sharpen their skills as warriors for Christ. That is what will be taking place on May 11-13, 2016 at the Church of God in Christ's National Men's Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The vision of Bishop Darrel L. Hines, the director of the Church of God in Christ's National Men's Conference, is to bring together laymen and recognize the importance of their functions in the Body of Christ. It is uniting Christian men in the unbreakable bond of fellowship.



The "Men Perfecting Men" conference embraces the value of all men irrespective of titles or credentials. It will afford men the opportunity to gather together to discuss things pertinent to the sustainability of Christian values in a world that challenges the notion of serving God. In a society where many males did not have the benefit of a nurturing father, a conference of this magnitude serves as a surrogate and can show younger males

the characteristics of a real man. The exchange of time-proven methods used to stimulate growth is another valuable component of the conference. The lineup of speakers includes Bishop Patrick Wootten, Bishop Darrel Hines, and the presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.

T

The National Men's Conference has in excess of 3,000 men in attendance. That number is a testament

of how many appreciate this venue where men can come and express themselves openly and clearly. There is a need for Christian men to have an opportunity to express their views and opinions from a man's perspective. That opportunity will once again be available at this year's conference.

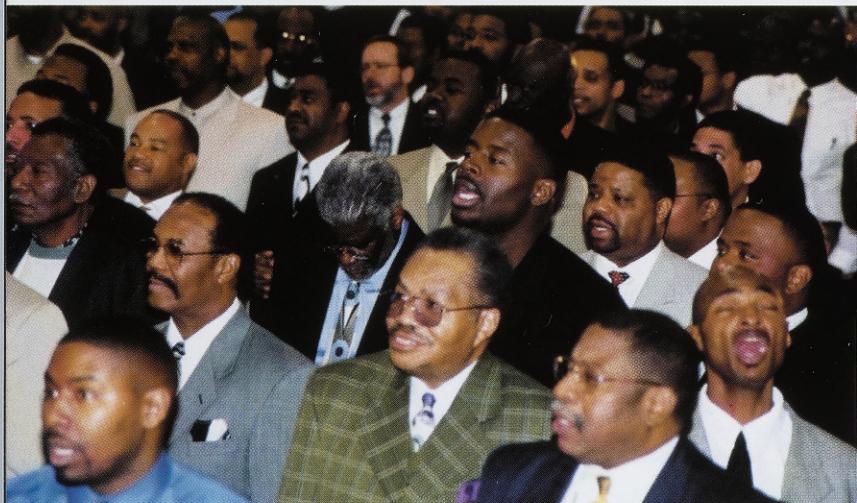
This conference is comparable in concept to military basic training. It brings together men from various backgrounds and at

the end of the training, they have been molded into a fighting force united under a common cause. They learn survival skills and become a disciplined force of reckoning. They become men who challenge one another to excel and find the resiliency within themselves to reach their full potential. The spiritual intensity of men perfecting men is parallel to teamwork on an obstacle course. You are training on how to overcome personal challenges while being part of a unit

There will be nightly services at 7 pm.

There are certain expectations of men. There is a behavior and attitude at which we as men must arrive. I consider the maturity with which men should represent themselves with words that the Apostle Paul shared: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11). As men, we have to be able to reason with wisdom. We have

the Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Brothers strengthening one another and men perfecting men... iron sharpening iron. The National Men's Conference, May 11-13, 2016 in Greensboro - you do not want to miss it! **TWT**



and supporting the members of the unit.

Registration for the 2016 National Men's Conference has been made convenient for those desiring to attend. Visit www.cogic.org and click on the National Men's Conference link. This year's workshop will include:

- **Finances**
- **Manhood**
- **The Vision**
- **Equipping Men for Their Future**
- **Men Perfecting Men**

to be thoughtful and not hasty. As Christian men, we have entered into a spiritual realm where we are in direct conflict with the devil. We have to learn how to fight this spiritual warfare while at the same time be husbands, fathers, examples, and navigate the daily challenges of life. There is no better teacher to instruct on manhood than a man who has learned how to be the kind of man that God wants. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psalm 37:37).

The 2016 National Men's Conference in Greensboro, NC is a chance to do something similar to what Jesus told Peter to do. Jesus comforted, reassured and instructed Simon Peter in one statement. And

Bishop Darrell I. Hines, Sr. - Chairman of National Men's Conference



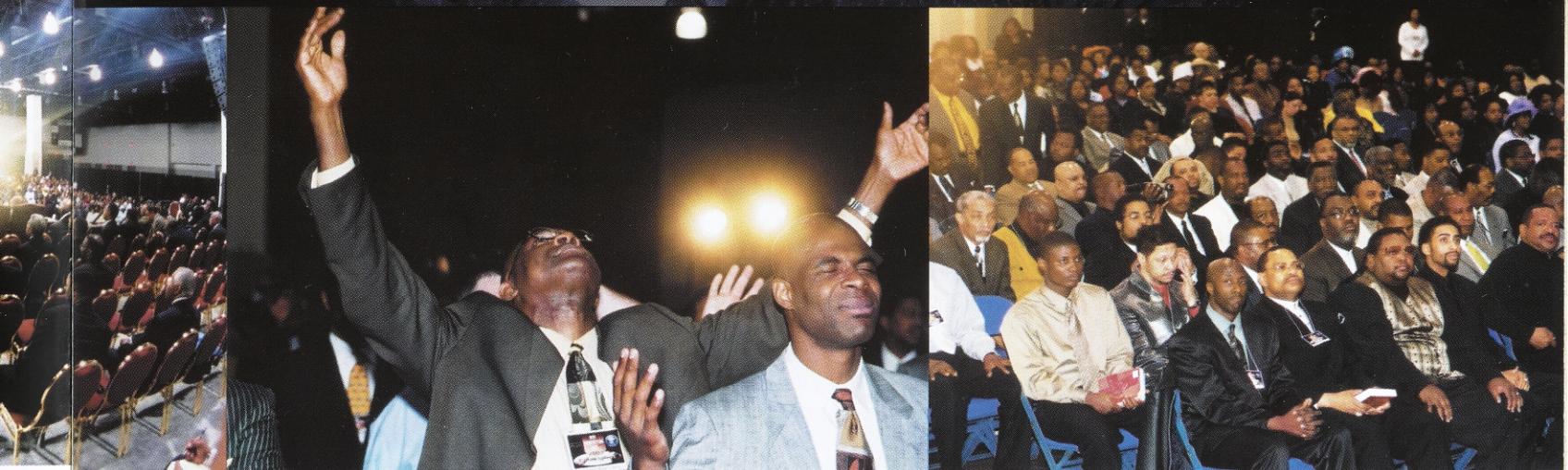
Administrative
Assistant Herman
Hicks
- Vice Chairman



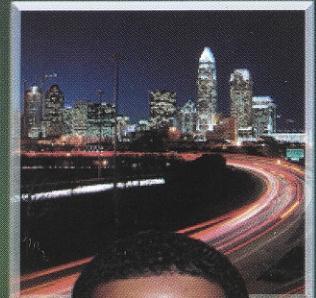
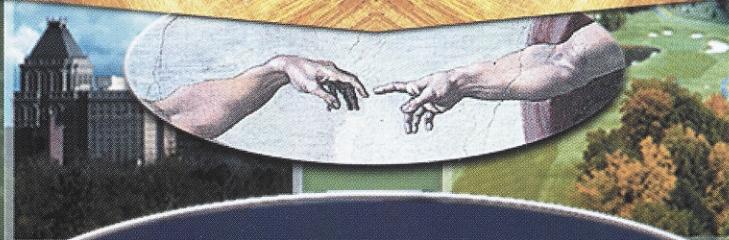
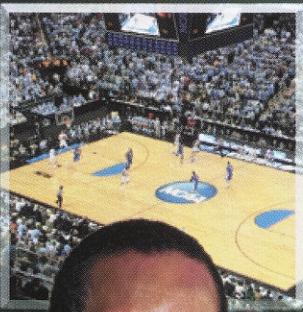
Evangelist Mildred
Coby
- Conference
Coordinator

Elder Rick Cunningham is the published author of "Making Choices in Christ: Moving Beyond Self Destructive Choices and Behavior."

AS CHRISTIAN MEN we have entered into a spiritual realm where we are in direct conflict with the devil. We have to learn how to fight this spiritual warfare while at the same time be husbands, fathers, examples, and navigate the daily challenges of life.



MEN PERFECTING MEN



Greensboro
North Carolina

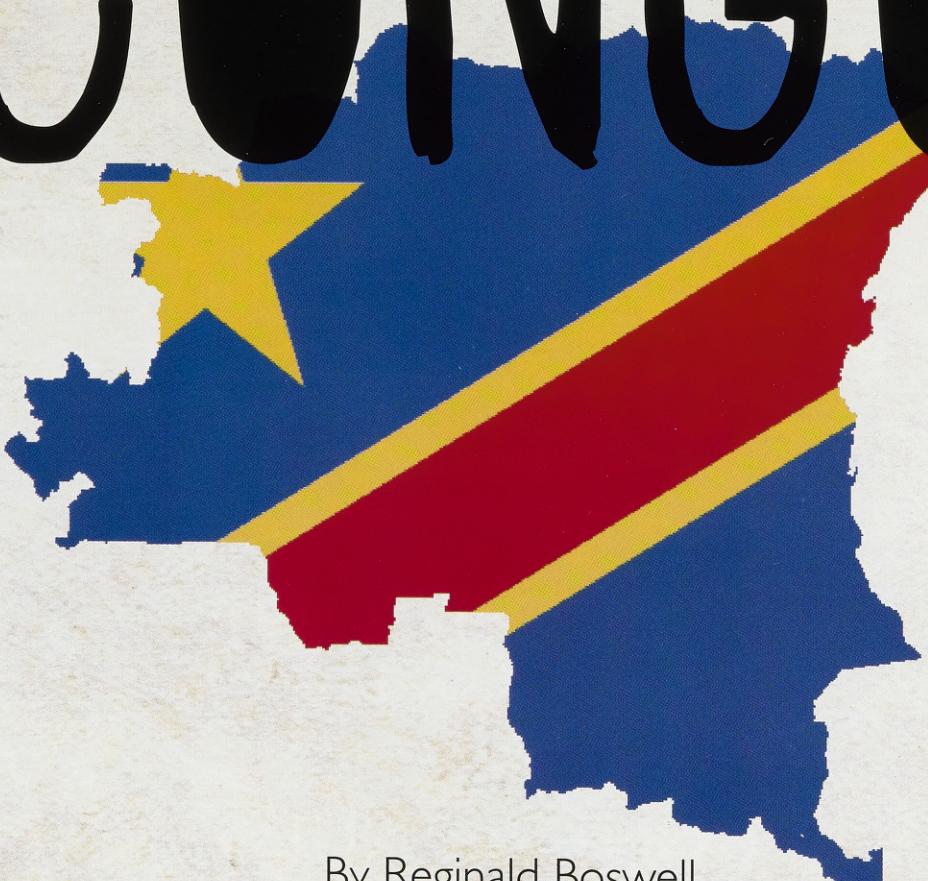
CONFERENCE
May 11-13, 2016

Bishop Charles Blake, Sr.
International Presiding Bishop

Evening worship W-F • Day sessions TH-F

Bishop Darrell L. Hines
Director/Chairman

COGIC in the CONGO



The map of the Democratic Republic of Congo is filled with the colors of the national flag: blue, red, and yellow. A yellow five-pointed star is positioned in the upper-left quadrant of the map. The map's outline follows the country's borders.

By Reginald Boswell





National Headquarters of COGIC/Congo.
leads by BISHOP HICHICA MAYUKE.



23. From left to right: Ass Bishop MUHANGENU GHISLAIN.
Bishop MAYUKE.
Mother MAYUKE.
Bona (Evangelist).

COGIC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Does the exploitation of the Congo's vast raw resources have its discontinuation rooted in a spiritual realignment to the True and Living God? The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly known as the Republic of Zaire (1971-1997), located in Central Africa, has been a hotbed for political unrest and a magnet for predators who tirelessly coordinate internal and external forces to siphon its wealth.

According to the 2015 Human Development Index (HDI), the DRC ranks 176 out of 185 countries in having the lowest standard of living. This index distinguishes the separation of the wealth of a nation and the standard of living of its people. Despite the DRC being listed among the top ten fastest growing economies in the world in 2014-2015, impoverished conditions have continually challenged pastors and leaders concerned with human advancement in the country.

COGIC on the Forefront

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) has been in the forefront in filling a spiritual void in the Congo. COGIC was established in Zaire in 1975. The perpetual need for missionaries to stand in the gap, work to convert souls, uphold godly standards and require accountability in political leadership still remains. Much prayer and work are needed to reinforce recent milestones made by those working in conjunction with COGIC bishops in the Congo. With a population of over 75 million, limitless opportunities exist in the DRC to manifest the work of Christ in the fourth most populous nation in Africa and the nineteenth most populous country in the world.

COGIC Democratic Republic of the Congo First (DRC I) jurisdiction prelate, Bishop Hichika Mayuke Gabriel, accepted a monumental task of guiding the work in the Congo in 1975. “*At first, the Bishop was doing everything - moderating, preaching, choirmaster, visiting people, etc. The first service was held in his house 35 years ago. His wife, Mother Godalieve Mayuke, director of the Woman’s Work in Jurisdiction I, and their children, were the first members to join the church,*” said the bishop’s administrative assistant, Robert Teuluila.



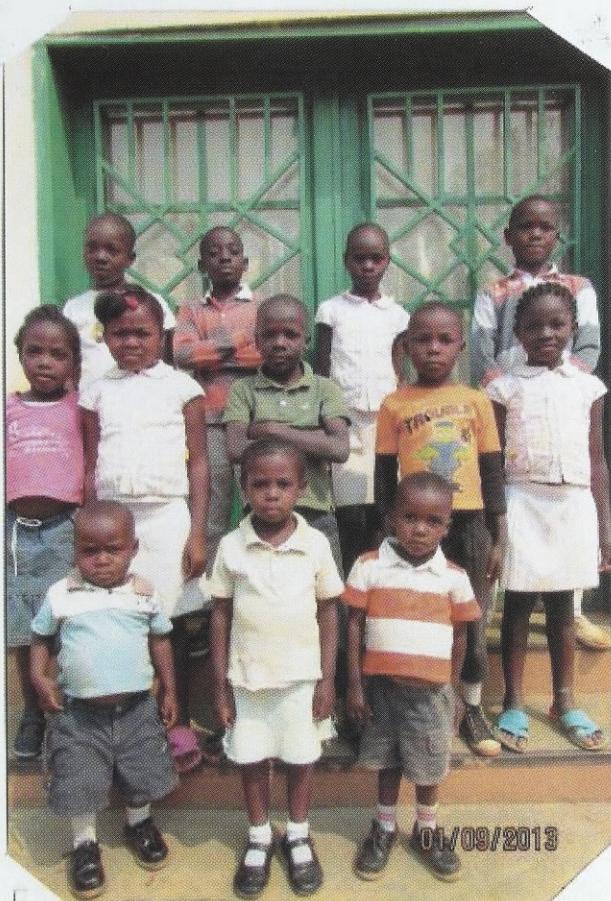
5. Mother MAYUKE, Ass supervisor of women Dept.
During a special convocation.



6. Women attending a seminar.



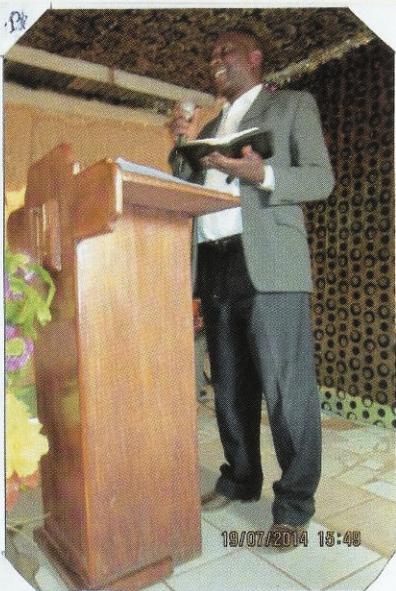
7. Staff of women Dept.



8. & 9. Orphans at Tumaini Orphanage center
In Ruashi Township.



10. Dormitory of girls at Tumaini Orphanage Center.



13. The Ass Bishop is preaching during a convocation of Women.



15. Sun shine band

The Work in the Congo

COGIC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has 115 churches and more than 30,000 members that attend services weekly. This number has been steadily growing. The newly formed Democratic Republic of Congo Second Jurisdiction (DRC II), led by Bishop Fabrice M. Mbumba (consecrated Nov 2014), adopted the hands-on approach of Bishop Mayuke by planting churches and helping fulfill the basic needs of the poor.

Supervisor of Women (DRC II) Mother Mary Beth Kennedy described the earliest of these missions as very perilous. She said, "*Bishop literally put his life on the line to start churches behind the bush.*" Bishop Mbumba's trailblazing missions into the dense jungle inhabited by Pygmies, some of the earliest inhabitants of the Congo, reportedly still using poison darts. They are a people described as "abandoned in our planet," according to Bishop Mbumba.

The first mission trip in September 2014 led Bishop Mbumba and his wife to abide in close proximity with Pygmy tribes for two weeks. They established two churches. When news of Bishop Mbumba and his wife's safe return was confirmed, everyone was relieved, according to Mother Kennedy, a 68-year



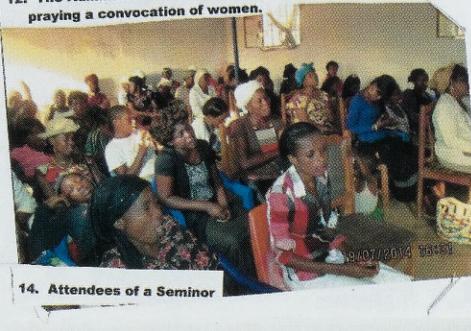
16. Kid at pre-school at Kanzenze. They learn in a building which has no roofs.



17. Primary school at Kanzenze but there is no building.



12. The Administrative Assistance, MUHANGENU GHISLAIN praying a convocation of women.



14. Attendees of a Seminar



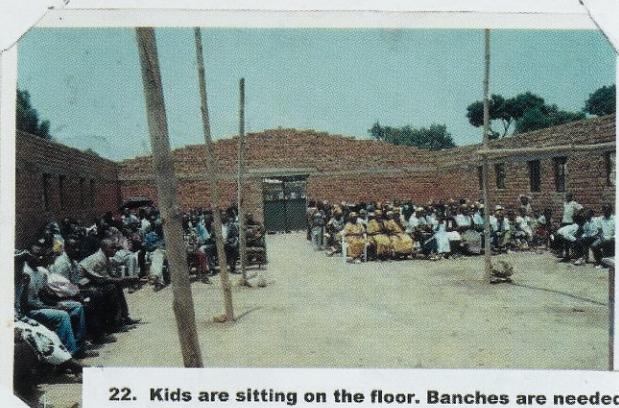
18. A class room and his pupils.



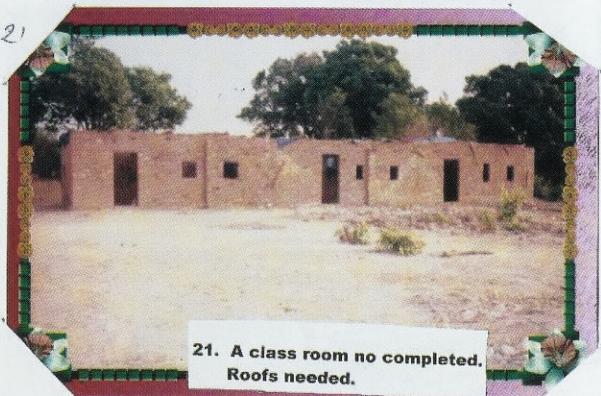
20. Tumaini college in Ruashi Township.



19. A class room.



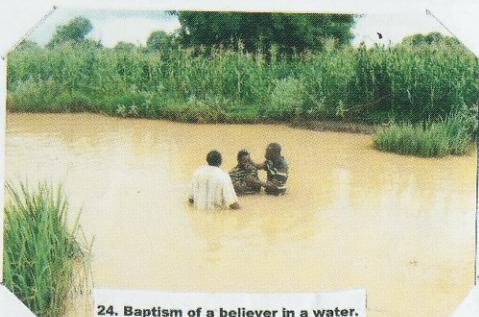
22. Kids are sitting on the floor. Banches are needed.



21. A class room no completed. Roofs needed.

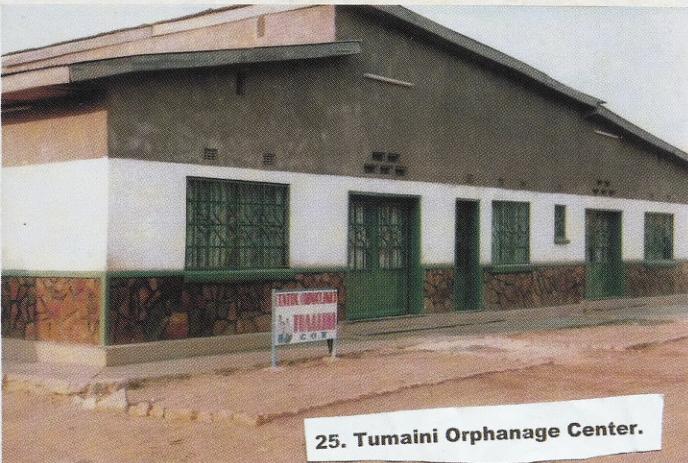


22. Kids are sitting on the floor. Banches are needed.



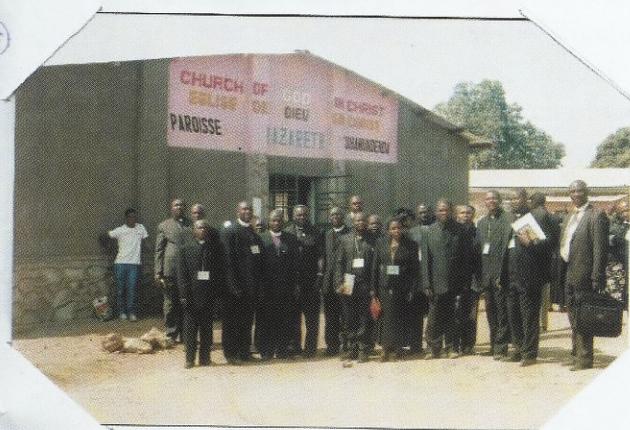
24. Baptism of a believer in a water.





25. Tumaini Orphanage Center.

National Headquarters of Cogic/Congo.
leads by BISHOP HICHIKA MAYUKE.



veteran in the mission fields who, with her late husband, Elder Charles Kennedy, was commissioned by COGIC in 1955 to serve in Africa. Mother Kennedy was reinvigorated by Bishop Mbumba's missionary journey into the heart of Africa.

In a summary entitled, "Project of Pygmies Integration," Bishop Mbumba outlines the aims of DRC II: (1) Improve missions, (2) Evangelism, (3) Economic development through teaching and the development of trades, (3) Building churches, schools and hospitals, (4) Development of agriculture, livestock and fisheries in *Pygmyland*.

Teams of missionaries are needed in the Congo, according to Jurisdiction I Administrative Assistant Robert Teuluila. Volunteers are needed in medical clinics to administer Vitamin A capsules for prevention and treatment of Exophthalmia, saving the sight of millions who would otherwise become blind. There is also a need for support in orphanages. The statistics report that parents are dying from AIDS at an alarming rate, leaving orphans to fend for themselves. Children are left to care for younger children, in many cases, carrying younger children on their backs or feeding them, as seen often at COGIC mission centers, according to Teuluila.

Passports are required and vaccinations must be taken before coming to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mother Kennedy said, "*You can see God working here. It's worth the effort and I praise God.*"

TWT

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Bishop Fabrice Malundama Mbumba
Church of God in Christ
Second Jurisdiction Ecclesiastic Congo/DRC
E-mail: famalu_coc@hotmail.com



Reginald Boswell is a member of True Light COGIC in Huntsville, AL, where Supt. Dr. Terrell Harris, Jr. is the pastor and Bishop Oscar L. Meadows is the prelate of Alabama 1st Jurisdiction.



RECAP & REVIEW



"IT IS NOW TIME FOR US TO GET EXTREME FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST!

Everyone is getting extreme for the things that they believe in....

Al Qaeda, ISIL, other radical groups are using extreme measures and extreme tactics to get others to know what they believe. It is now time for the Church to use extreme measures and ex-

people attended the 108th Annual Holy Convocation throughout the more than weeklong event.

It is remarkable how much can be jam-packed into one week. However, The America's Center is a great venue because nearly all of the events are held there. One look at the schedule for Convocation and one quickly realizes that the Church of God In Christ is one active denomination. With nearly all

with sharing the gospel with as many men, women, boys and girls as possible. These Street Teams also invited thousands of residents to the Church of God in Christ services. The IDOE continues to lead the evangelistic efforts for the entire denomination.

The Evangelism Department has taken the lead, along with other departments, to get the Church of God In Christ out of the

of the 108th Annual Holy Convocation: A WEEK OF EXTREME COMMITMENT

By Elder David-George Newsome

treme tactics to let others know that there is a more excellent way than the way that the world offers.”

These were the words of our Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle, the seventh in succession, the Most Reverend Charles Edward Blake, while addressing the male credential holders of the Church at the Presiding Bishop's Forum on Saturday, November 7, 2015. The COGIC theme for 2015 was: "Christ's Extreme Sacrifice Calls for Our Extreme Commitment." This theme was heavily used during the 108th Annual Holy Convocation held at The America's Center in St. Louis. An estimated 50,000-plus

the events of six major departments and many other auxiliaries held at the America's Center, the week was certainly exciting!

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EVANGELISM (IDOE)

Once again, President Elijah Hankerson and staff planned many outreach and evangelistic events throughout the week. The IDOE actually got started before the convocation even began. The department ministered at jails and prisons in the Greater St. Louis area. Several services were held reaching hundreds of men and women with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Street Teams were deployed to many of the distressed areas of the city, charged

"building" and into the community. The department has also been charged with several of the presiding bishop's mandates of prayer and fasting. The IDOE annually produces a Prayer Guide that includes 11 petitions, to be prayed for 11 minutes for 40 days. The petitions include:

- Holy Convocation
- The Presiding Bishop
- Government Officials
- COGIC Leaders
- Pastors
- Church Members
- The Persecuted Church
- Extreme Commitment
- Empowerment and Revelation to Face Society's Challenges
- The Great Commission
- Holiness

In addition to the Prayer Guide, the IDOE sponsored a Prayer Walk on Saturday, October 31, 2015 that included The America's Center and surrounding areas. This walk was held to consecrate and dedicate the grounds to the collective and sacred worship of the true and living God. The International Department of Evangelism has given a report on the results of the collective efforts at the Holy Convocation:

- 313 persons received salvation
- 31 persons filled with the Holy Ghost
- 92 persons reporting healing

A more comprehensive report on the efforts of the International Department of Evangelism is available on the COGIC website. To God be the glory!

SERVICES, GLORIOUS SERVICES!

There is nothing like COGIC worship! From the first service on Tuesday morning to the last service on Sunday evening, God met us each and every time. The messages were outstanding, Dr. Judith Christie McAllister and the IMD truly ministered from the depths of their souls each service, and the Ministry of Helps (ushers, nurses, greeters, adjutants and security) were ready with valuable assistance to the saints. The America's Center staff allowed us the freedom and pleasure of turning the venue into an international Church of God in Christ gathering spot.

The saints now worship in one facility. Nearly 50,000 people worshipping God together is tremendous. The music was also tremendously anointed, including the pre-sermonic selection that featured Lady Audrey DuBois-Harris,





who is a member of the Church of God in Christ and a professional operatic soprano.

The highly anticipated “Morning Gems with Lady Mae” service was nothing short of a blessing and a remarkable success at this year’s convocation. Bishops’ wives, supervisors, first ladies and wives of department heads, gathered in the Grand Ballroom of the St. Louis America’s Center, with expectancy, to hear directly from our Presiding Bishop’s esteemed, gracious and capable counterpart - Lady Mae L. Blake. The Lord truly blessed Lady Mae to guide, direct and spiritually pour into these women leaders of COGIC with the theme: **“Tools For A Unique Woman”** Once again, the Lord met the women of God in a very mighty way.

The highlight of all services, activities and meetings is the Lord’s Day Celebration held on Sunday. This is the time when we hear from our Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle, the Seventh in Succession, His Eminence, The Most Reverend Charles Edward Blake, Sr. “God Has Your Back!” was the title of the message delivered by the presiding bishop, taken from Exodus 14:19-20. Other highlights of the Official Day message included:

- There is no better place than the place where God has you. God knows best!
- Once you see a miracle, it is easy to believe for another one.
- Things we escape from continually try to entangle and recapture us.
- Sometimes when we need to feel the very presence and anointing of God in a very real way, God sometimes seems far from us. Christ, King David and Job all experienced this feeling.
- When God moves, it is important

to know that He has not left.
Sometimes God moves just because
He's God.

- Psalm 43:19 must be understood:
God can do a new thing whenever
He decides to do a new thing.
- Sometimes God moves to test
our faith.
- Do not become too manifestation
focused—God is not what He does;
He is God because of who He is.
- In all ways and at all times, never
stop praising God, for He always
has your back.

"COGIC CARES" EVENTS

The Presiding Bishop has expressed his desire for the Church to impact the areas in which we serve. To this end, several community-minded events were planned for the week:

COTE BRILLIANTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL –
General Board members Bishop Lawrence M. Wooten and Bishop George Dallas McKinney led a contingency of various COGIC leaders to visit Cote Brilliante Elementary School for the fifth year in a row. The leaders were blessed with a welcome program by the 6th grade students and choir. After that, those present visited classrooms to read to students. The students were able to ask questions of the leaders and shared with them their desires for the future.

Alderman Sam Moore arranged this visit again this year as part of the "COGIC Cares" events. The principal and staff are attempting to provide Cote Brilliante students with the resources necessary for a successful life. However, as with most schools, funding deficiencies have made it difficult.





JOB FAIR – More than 50 employers and 600 plus job seekers attended the COGIC Job Fair held on Thursday. Some employers were hiring on the spot and several of the local residents were able to get jobs the same day! Many of the employers have a national presence so many delegates were able to make connections in St. Louis for their own hometowns.



CHRISTMAS IN NOVEMBER

– Spearheaded by Bishop Lawrence M. Wooten, the 2015 “Christmas in November” was yet another tremendous community outreach effort. The event, once again, blessed very appreciative St. Louis community members in need with food, hygiene items, free haircuts, toys for children, clothing and much more. The Church of God in Christ has been sponsoring this important event for more than 25 years.



COGIC CHARITIES BANQUET

On Saturday afternoon, more than 1200 people gathered in The Renaissance Ballroom for the **COGIC CHARITIES PRESIDING BISHOP'S WE CARE BANQUET**. This annual gathering raises funds to give scholarships to young people from all over the world. This year's guest speaker was mega movie star, Mr. Denzel Washington. Mr. Washington is a member of West Angeles COGIC, under the leadership of our presiding bishop. Mr. Washington gave a very personal and emotional speech with an impact felt all across COGIC. After a very moving introduction from his pastor, Bishop Blake, he talked about the power and importance of faith - faith in God, His power, His presence and finally, His person. Of special note is that Mr.

Washington's father was a COGIC pastor for more than 60 years. He is a very humble gentleman who loves his wife, children and Bishop and Lady Blake. Over \$50,000 in scholarships were awarded to high school and college students as a result of the funds raised from the banquet.

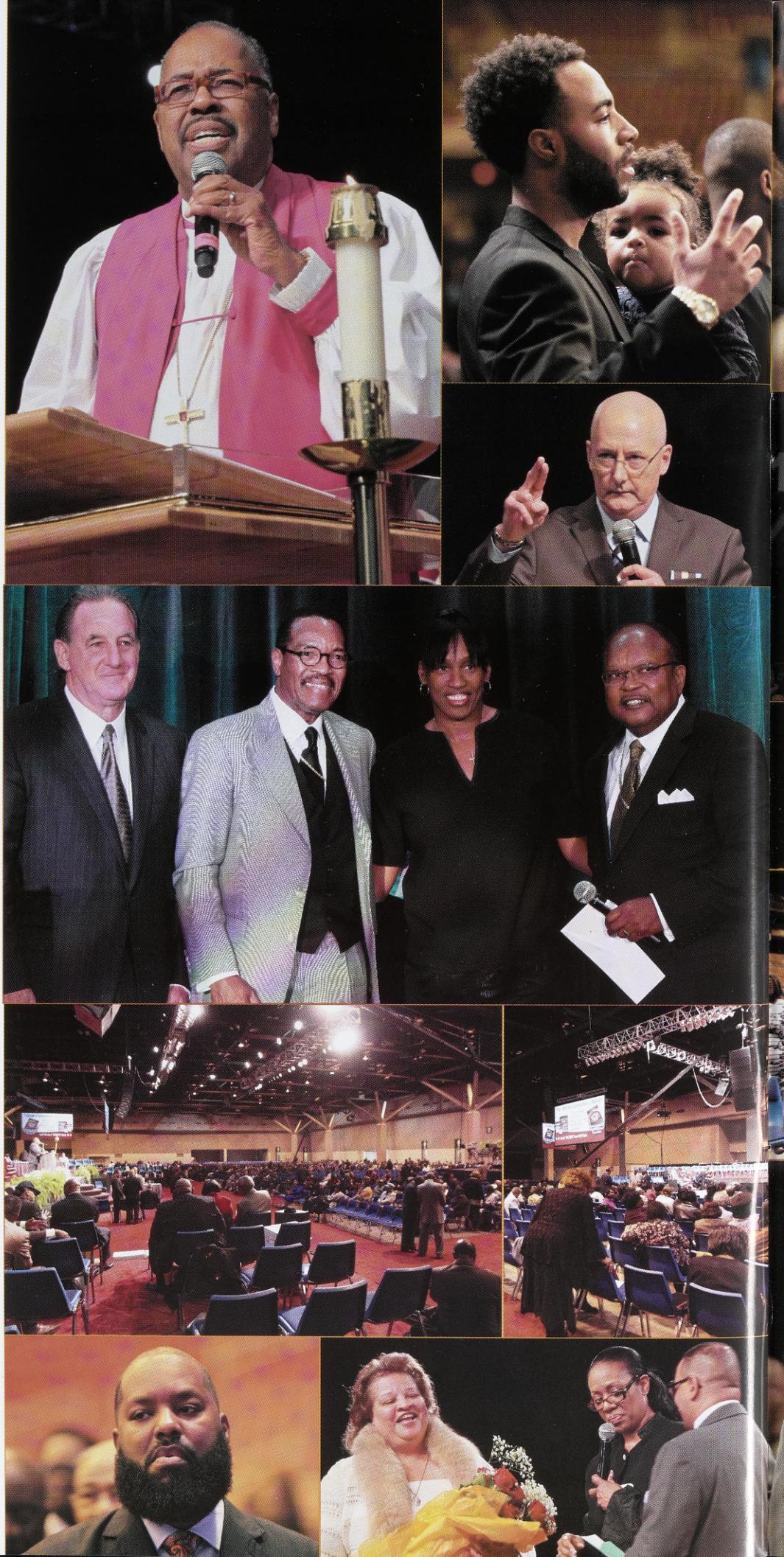
PRESIDING BISHOP'S FORUM

Psalmist David Daughtry (who recently released his first solo project on Karew Records) led Praise and Worship. An opening presentation regarding the occasion was made by Bishop Jerry W. Macklin, along with presentations on the Laity Campaign and the National Leadership Conference held this year in Albuquerque, NM.

Next, Elder Darrin Burns, Project Manager, gave an update on the Leila Mason Building renovation on the Headquarters Campus. This is a continuation of the presiding bishop's desire to beautify the campus. The building will be complete and dedicated this April during the Spring Call meeting. More than \$900,000 have been invested to improve the building, including an addition to house the archives of the Church of God in Christ. When completed, more than \$1.5M will have been invested in the restoration of the Leila Mason building.

All jurisdictions are asked to support the International Laity Campaign with 100 percent participation. These funds are vital to the support of the ministries of the Church of God in Christ, especially in the areas of Education and Missions.

The Presiding Bishop gave several opening nuggets for those present:



- God saw fit to put us in groups; 1 is too small a number for success.
- You are not a leader if there is no one following you.
- Stop playing while your opponent is fighting. You will be hurt if you are playing while your opponent is fighting.
- Goals and objectives can be reached and achieved if you put your heart and hands in God's hand.

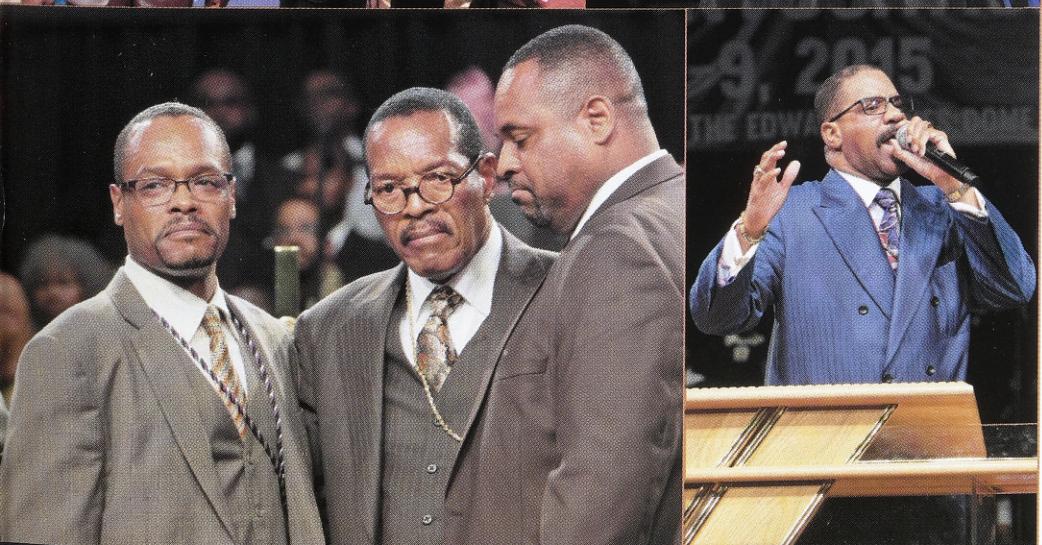
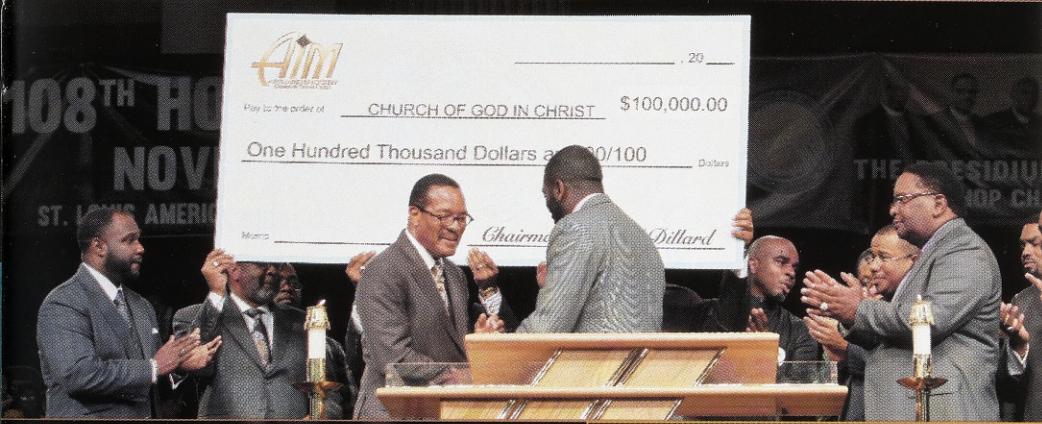
Next, presentations were made by Bishop Edwin Bass, COGIC Urban Initiatives Director; Bishop Vincent Mathews, COGIC World Missions President; Coach Al Hollingsworth, Bishop Elijah Hankerson, Pastor Ben Stephens, and Elder Tyrone Potts, COGIC Chief Financial Officer.

The final highlight of the session was the introduction of a delegation from Israel. There are now 5 Orthodox Ethiopian Jewish churches that have united with the Church of God in Christ. COGIC is now in more than 70 countries around the world.

COGIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

While it is true that we have great services and opportunities to serve the community, we also take care of the business of the church. The General Assembly met on Monday and Tuesday. There were several major areas of business to be handled: 2016-2017 Budget, filling a vacancy on the Judiciary Board, receiving the Report of the General Board, and a special recognition for Founder Bishop Charles Harrison Mason.

The first item of business was the opening remarks from the chairman, Bishop James W. Hunt. After thanking the saints for their support, Bishop Hunt said, "The



Presiding Bishop and Chief Apostle, Bishop Charles Edward Blake, Sr. is the leader of our Church and is the only person authorized to speak on behalf of the Church." He continued to say that the presiding bishop is authorized to correct any situation that is in conflict with the Word of God or the Constitution of the Church. He encouraged everyone not to speak on behalf of the Church, as they are unauthorized to do so.

The General Board made recommendations to dissolve multiple jurisdictions in various areas into one, new jurisdiction:

- California Western
- New Jersey Southern
- California Greater Northern
- Second**
- Missouri Mid-West (new)

The Judiciary Board was the next item on the agenda with one seat available. Bishop Martin Luther Johnson was elected to the Judiciary Board position for a full term.

Next, the Report of the Trustees was given, outlining their Annual Summation of Activities from April 2015 - November 2015. This report was approved as presented.

Continued on Page 48





GENERAL COUNCIL OF PASTORS AND ELDERS

SHEPHERDS CONFERENCE & ELDERS ACADEMY

2016

Theme:
**ONE POWERFUL VISION...
MANY POSSIBLE DREAMS**
Joel 2:23-28; Ecclesiastes 5:3a

May 2-5, 2016

Bishop Charles E. Blake
Presiding Bishop
Church Of God In Christ, Inc.

Administrative Assistant Michael Eaddy
Chairman
General Council of Pastors & Elders

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Conference Co-Chairs:
Overseer Marc A. Thomas, Sr.
Administrative Assistant David Stokes

HOST BISHOPS OF MIDWEST

Bishop Ocie Booker, Illinois First
Bishop Cody V. Marshall, Illinois Northern
Bishop Sedgwick Daniels, Wisconsin First
Bishop James C. Austin, Illinois Fifth East
Bishop William Bonner, Illinois Sixth
Bishop Willie J. Chambliss, Emeritus Illinois Midwest
Bishop R. D. Edward Goodwin Sr., Illinois Seventh
Bishop Darrell L. Hines, Illinois Midwest
Bishop Juan LaRue Morrison, Central Illinois
Bishop Embra Robert Patterson Jr., Southern Illinois
Bishop Robert R. Sanders, Illinois Third
Bishop William Scott, Illinois Southeast
Bishop James E. Washington, Illinois Fifth West
Bishop Donald L. Alford, Indiana North Central
Bishop Mark H. Blade, Indiana First
Bishop Benjamin A. Sanders, Indiana Second
Bishop E. Bobby Warren, Indiana Third
Bishop C. H. McClelland, Wisconsin Northwest
Bishop J. C. Williams, Wisconsin Third

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The Budget for April 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017 was presented by the Trustees as follows:

	Revenue	Expenses	Excess/Deficit
2013/2014 (Proposed)	10,195,000	10,195,000	0
2013/2014 (Actual)	10,468,208	10,162,165	306,043
2014/2015 (Proposed)	10,506,500	10,506,500	0
2014/2015 (Actual)	9,945,945	9,774,868	171,077
2015/2016 (Proposed)	9,921,000	9,921,000	0
2016/2017 (Proposed)	9,922,000	9,922,000	0

A final note for all involved - the Office of the General Secretary no longer issues blank certificates. All certificates will be issued in a particular person's name and identification number.

It is an exciting time to be a member of the Kingdom of God and a member of the Church of God in Christ! We now look forward to a prosperous 2016 with the theme chosen by our presiding bishop: Fighting for Salvation and Righteousness in a Violent and Immoral World based on I Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

As you can tell from this brief Recap and Review, our church is alive and well and doing great things for God! It is very comforting to know that God has our back so we can continue to move forward in Him. To God be the Glory! **TWT**

David-George Newsome is a former resident of Muskegon, MI who now resides in San Diego, CA. He is a member of St. Stephen's Cathedral COGIC in San Diego (General Board member Bishop George Dallas McKinney, pastor). He is married to Melba White Newsome, father of two, James and JaMel; and grandfather of one, JaMilah.



Congratulations! Sister Margaret Will

For the past 34 years, Sister Margaret Will has diligently and unselfishly devoted her talents for the betterment of the church ministry at the Israelite Church of God in Christ. The fruits of her labor has placed her in key positions within the church to include Sunday School Secretary and Teacher, Church Secretary and Administrative Assistant, a coordinator of special events on behalf of the Women's Department, a long term member of the Elder's and Minister's Wives Council, and Choir Director. In addition she was instrumental in the development of the Israelite Summer Ministry Development Institute, a church administration summer experience designed to prepare teens and young adults for future church leadership roles.

Sister Will is considered a great asset to the Israelite Church Ministry especially in the area of Church Administration. Her technical expertise, dedication and faithfulness have resulted in the elevation to the position of Colorado Jurisdiction Secretary, a trailblazing opportunity that is not only unprecedented, but historically significant within the Colorado Jurisdiction in breaking down the walls of gender stereotypes in positions of great authority. Sister Will's accomplishments and achievements have established her as a role model for future generations to follow.

Without regard to the many accolades that can be said on behalf of Sister Will, the most important thing to note is that she is saved, holy-ghost filled, and a great Woman of God! On behalf of your Israelite Church Family, it is with great joy that we express our sincerest congratulations on your selection and recognition as one of COGIC's 2015 150 Influential Women. May God continue to bless the fruit of your labor, "and let her own works praise her in the gates."



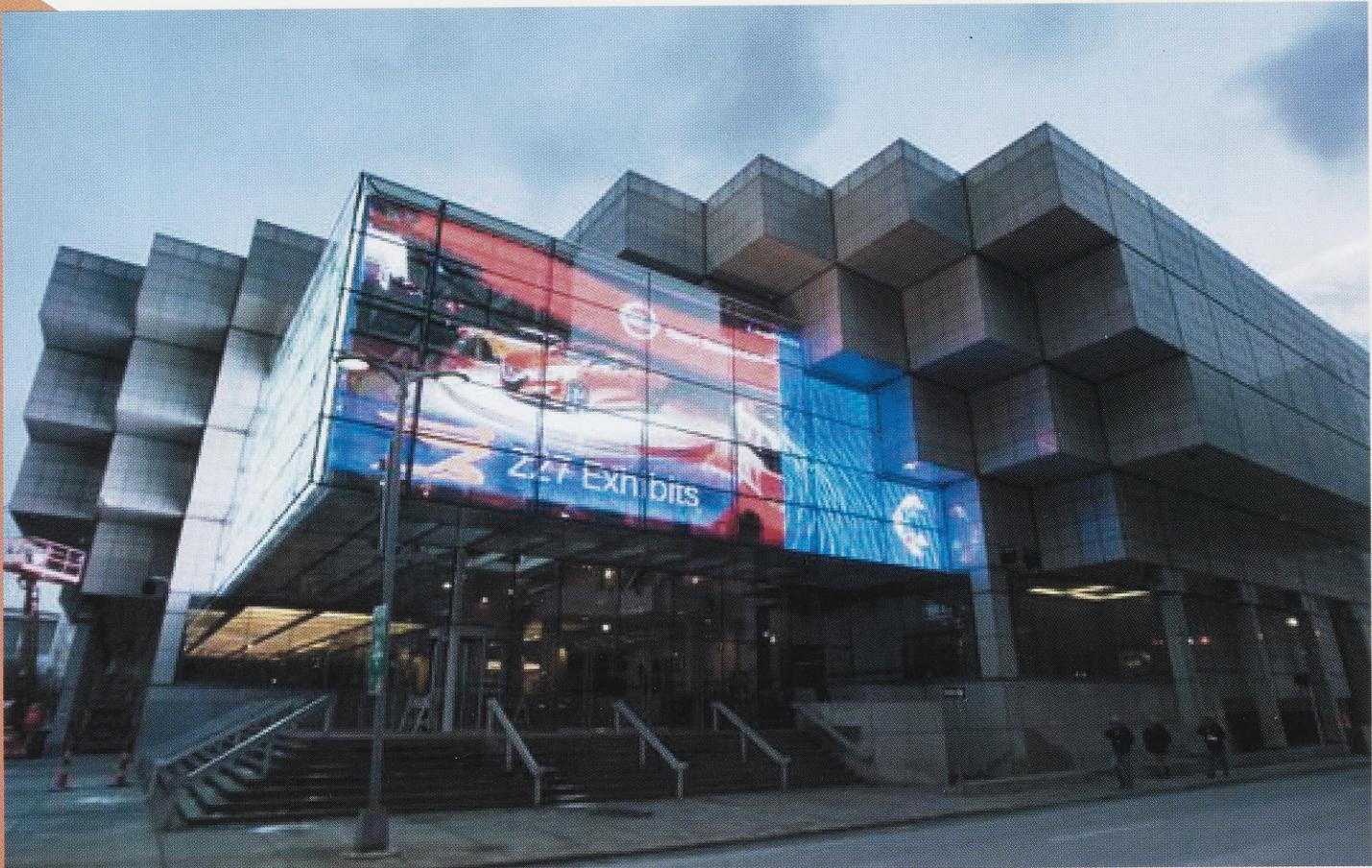
2016
**WOMEN'S
INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION/
CRUSADE
RETURNS
to the
MOTOR CITY**

By Leonitta Turner



The production of the Model T in 1908 by the Ford Motor Company took Detroit by storm and changed the life of the common man in the U.S. forever. In 1999, the Model T was named the most influential car of the 20th century by the Global Automotive Elections Foundation. The 49th COGIC Women's International Convention/Crusade, under the direction of General Supervisor Mother Willie Mae Rivers, was held in Detroit in the same year. It has not been held there since that time.

With the continued revitalization of Detroit and surrounding areas, this year's 66th Women's International Convention/Crusade is certain to impact the lives of those who attend. Hosted by Michigan Northeast Historic Jurisdiction, where 1st Assistant Prelate Bishop Phillip A. Brooks is presiding bishop, and Norma L. Burrell is the supervisor. There are eleven co-host jurisdictions, as well as 12 supporting jurisdictions from various areas in Michigan, New York, and neighboring Canada. The convention/crusade, scheduled May 30 – June 3, 2016, will be held at the recently remodeled Cobo Hall Conference Exhibition Center in downtown Detroit. One of the largest and best of class convention centers in the nation, Cobo Hall is strategically situated near hotels, Detroit's historic district, and plenty of retail shopping. Located directly on the riverfront, Canada is just a day trip away by bridge or tunnel.



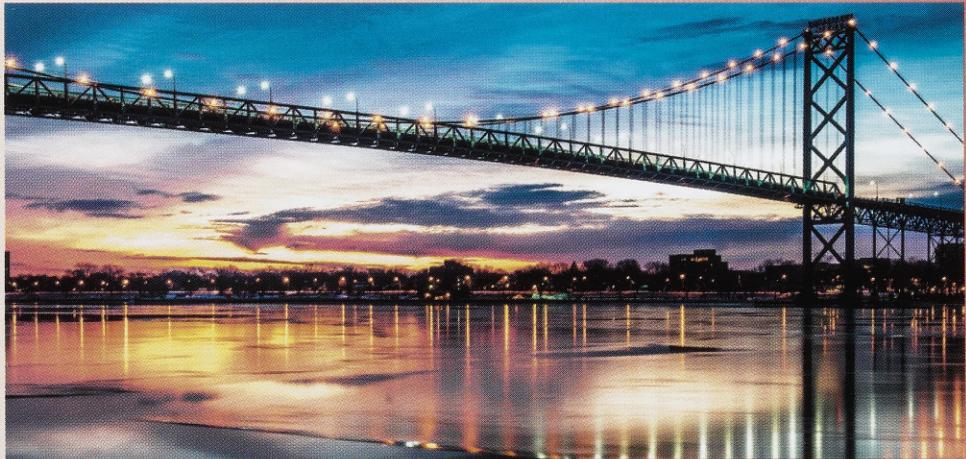
The convention/crusade will begin with a 12-hour prayer and praise shut-in, led by National Director - International Prayer Ministry leader, Mother Frances Kelly. This highly anticipated event is open to the public. Participants will come together as one in prayer as they seek God for healing and deliverance of families, churches, and the nation. Attendees will have an opportunity to testify and thank God for breakthroughs that occur during this time. Activities will include the Leadership Conference, The Gospel Explosion and Mother Rivers' "49 and Under" question and answer session. Nightly services will also be held.

According to Supervisor Dianne M. Bogan, We have experienced more of the young generation attending the convention since Mother implemented the '49 and Under' dialogue (Question & Answer

session). '49 and Under' bridges the gap between the old and the young. It allows us to influence the young ladies, bring them in, and mentor them. It allows them to walk this walk with us."

Detroit has a vast array of talent; however, the selection of guest speakers and musical artists is currently pending. Local artists who have supported previous conventions include Marvin Sapp, the Clark Sisters, Lisa Page Brookes, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, the Winans, Dorinda Clark-Cole, and Karen Clark Sheard.

Attendees at the 66th Women's International Convention/Crusade will get a sense of Detroit's deep COGIC history. It was the home of Mother Lillian Brooks Coffey, the second general supervisor from 1945-1964. Mother Coffey began the Women's Convention in 1950 with 100 women. Mother



Anne Bailey, who served as the third general supervisor from 1964-1975, also has roots in Detroit. Three General Board bishops also currently reside there.

Outreach ministry and youth programs are an important part of the Convention/Crusade. Demonstrating the motto, "Better Homes, Better Communities, Better Schools and a Better Word," convention participants will again take it to the streets. In addition to visiting nursing homes and a prison, three nonprofit organizations will receive financial donations from the Department of Women. Scholastic scholarships will also be awarded to individuals who are enrolled to attend college fulltime.

The pre-registration deadline for Red Card participants is April 15, 2016. The cost for lay delegates is \$525.00, based on double occupancy, which

includes room, meals, and shuttle service from the various hotels to the convention center. Individuals can also register on-site. Information regarding the convention and registration can be viewed at <http://www.cogic.org/womensdepartment>.

Following the convention on Saturday, June 4th, convention delegates may participate in a tour of historic Detroit. The agenda may include a visit to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, other historic sites, and shopping in Canada. The tour will begin at 9:00 am and conclude at 4:00 pm. **TWT**

Leonitta Turner is a member of Fresh Anointing Ministries Worship Center (Summerville, SC).

eShow

Registration Management Platform

A Great Start to an Awesome Convention Experience

By Evangelist DeLisa Reed

Naturally, when making plans to attend the convocation, we want things to be as easy and convenient as possible. This is especially true when it comes to manipulating registration websites online.

The fewer moving parts that someone has to deal with, the better. Hence, the Church of God in Christ has provided a new registration platform that will make life much easier when registering for various conferences, conventions, and the Holy Convocation.

Introducing ... (drum roll, please) ... **eShow**, our new online system designed to improve the online and onsite registration process. This online platform covers five core aspects for event management: registration, housing and travel, exhibit, abstract and website management. “**eShow** replaces our ICAS system and lends itself to a registration experience that will provide for more timely confirmation pieces,” according to Pastor Keith Kershaw, director of the Office of Convention Planning (OCP). “It will be used to handle all registrations for

our COGIC conventions, beginning with the 2016 Leadership Conference that was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In addition, the **eShow** software provides a smoother transition between registrations and hotel reservations.”

According to **eShow**, the real power of their software is birthed from a synergy that has been developed between all of their service areas, such as online registration, onsite registration, exhibit sales management, and as event manager. **eShow**’s breadth and depth of

experience means you enjoy a fully integrated, customized and branded experience, where every aspect of event management is complimented with an equally strong counterpart.

Pastor Kershaw further stated that the move to embrace what other Fortune 500 companies utilized for their convention registrations is right in line with Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.'s vision for moving our church forward in this 21st century.

"**eShow** allows for a better alignment between the spiritual and business aspects of conferences and conventions within our reformation by allowing for a more consolidated and centralized process, which lends itself to a standardized method of operation that will ensure that information for each attendee is connected and consistent across the board."

So, how can this process benefit you? There are a plethora of advantages for using the **eShow** registration platform. However, the five most popular advantages include the following:

1 Saves time – You can sign up online when and where is most convenient for you in just a few minutes without having to print, manually complete and send paper forms.

2 Improves customer support – Your online registration provider will ensure you have all the necessary information needed to answer immediately any payment-related questions you, as an attendee, may have.

3 Provides for securely and conveniently paying online

– Instead of writing checks or having to submit cash at the front line, you can simply enter your credit card details online to securely complete your transaction in seconds.

4 Provides you with an automated confirmation receipt – Once the payment is processed, you will then receive a receipt confirming you are signed up for your desired event and your payment has been securely processed and accepted.

5 Grants access to early bird pricing – With flexible pricing options, you may be rewarded with discounted fees and possible other perks if you sign up by a specific date.

While these advantages are not inclusive, they are the basis for a great start to an awesome convention experience that is sure to inspire future COGIC endeavors for years to come. **TWT**

Dee, a 29-year veteran public school educator, is a member of Cathedral of Faith COGIC in Euless, TX. She is a member of Texas Northeast First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, led by her pastor and bishop, the honorable Bishop James E. Hornsby and Supervisor of Women, Mother Pia Haynes-Williams.

MASS Incarceration: Why the Church MUST Speak

By Bishop Talbert W. Swan II, M.Div.

German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx defined religion as the “opium of the people.” In other words, he opined that religion was responsible for the propagation of a “false consciousness,” which is alien to the concrete economic problems of religious people. He posited that religious people were in search of an “object” of reliance other than self, and that religion encourages the projection of one’s desire into the “realm of the fantastic.” Marx concluded that religion obscured the actual state of one’s existences and encouraged the alienation of oneself from the concrete realities of this world to a world of illusion and fantasy. His critique of religion was an economic critique of capitalism and the tendency of religious organizations and leaders of his day to be in cahoots with the establishment.

In contrast to Marx's critique, African Americans have always viewed religion as a major asset towards social stability and its potential to engender social change. The Church was involved in ending slavery and human suffering and has consistently advocated for social change human flourishing. The Church was an active participant and major catalyst in the Civil Rights Movement and at the forefront of just about every major gain toward justice in the history of this nation.

Today, society once again calls upon the Church to confront a "legal" means of human distortion in America. Informed by historic racial consciousness in the nation's social psyche, fueled by the so-called "War on Drugs," grave economic disparities, racial profiling, racially motivated policing, and prison profiteering, this legal means of human distortion necessitates a collective response from the Church. Like slavery before it, today's mass incarceration in America is a deep humanitarian concern. Criminal justice policies developed over the past three decades have resulted in mass arrest and incarceration that has fallen disproportionately on communities of color. Along with this is the collateral consequences, which disqualify people from jobs, housing and social services because of criminal records.

The United States has 5% of the world's population but 25% of the world's incarcerated population. With over 7.2 million in jails, prisons, on parole, on probation, or under some form of correctional supervision, there are over 18 million Americans whose felony records disqualify them from public housing, voting and political participation in America's democracy in some states, and from several government benefits and employment possibilities. Needless to say, this disproportionately affects African Americans.

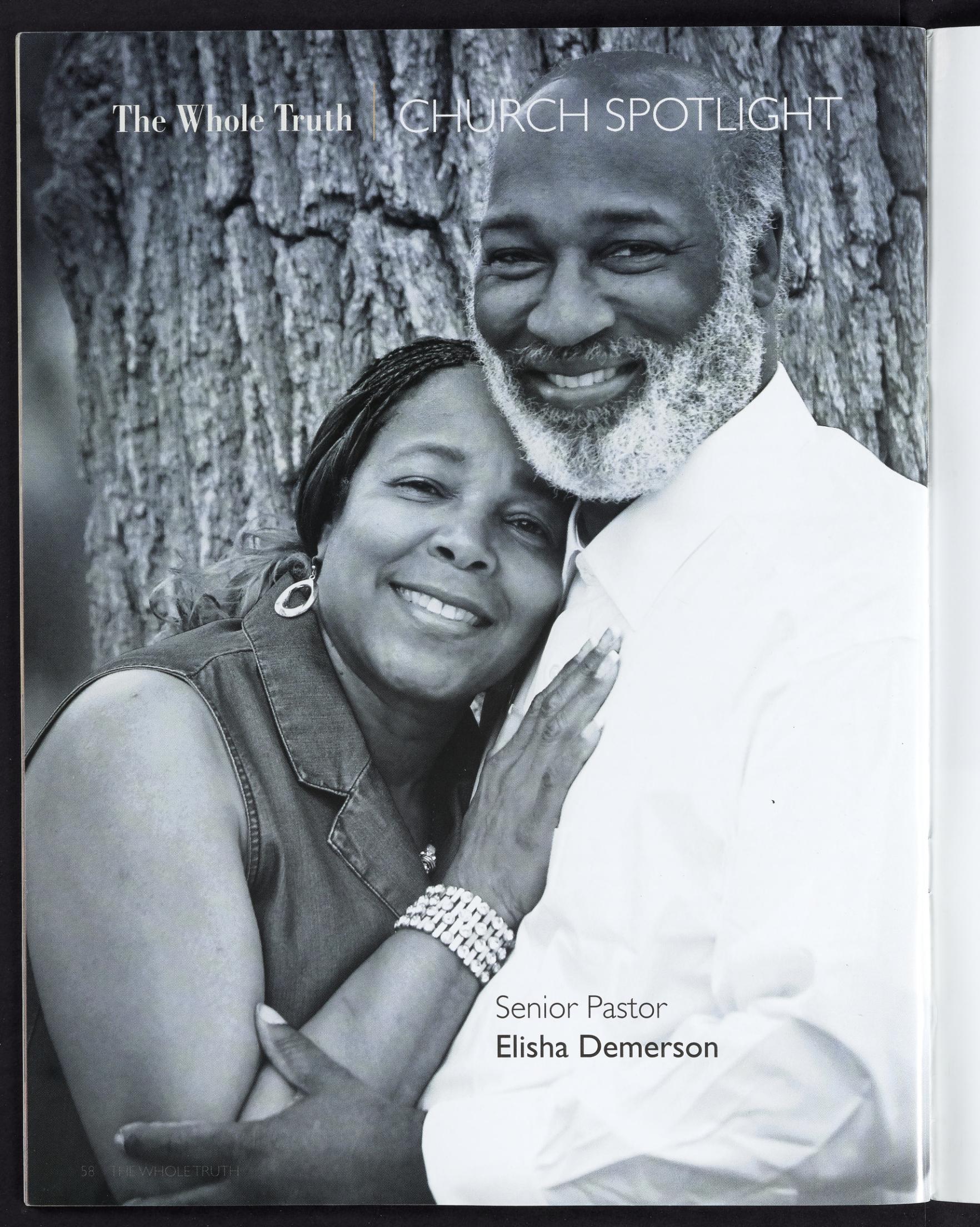
Racially motivated laws, policing and criminal justice practices are at the undergirding of inequality in America. While overtly racist segregation policies are no longer the accepted norms, today's practices and criminal justice policies, which have disproportionately impacted African-Americans, have both diminished the gains accomplished during the civil rights move-

ment and, unfortunately, relegated large numbers of African-Americans to second-class citizens based on criminal records. The late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall must be looking down on America, shaking his head in dismay at seeing a nation where a criminal conviction has become the surrogate for race discrimination.

The consequences of mass incarceration are reflected in the breakdown of the family structure, increase in concentrated forms of poverty, and grave economic disparities. Prospects for sociopolitical and economic mobility within the structures of the American democracy and economic systems are systemically limited for those within the prison system. Inmates serve time for their crimes behind bars with their families on the outside, but they also serve time with their families on the outside. The perpetuation of mass incarceration in America, particularly among African Americans, is a travesty that leads to violence, community insecurity and instability. This is why the Church cannot remain silent. It must advocate for humanity's quest for justice, equality, and fair treatment in the American criminal justice system.

The main influence of Christianity to engender social change has always been its inherent ability to recognize the respect for human dignity and human worth. Central to Christianity's tenets are the concepts of redemption, restoration, and reconciliation. These convictions are rooted in the claim that if "any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Church must be the leading voice in the call for a holistic approach to punishment and discipline that begins with sentencing reform, the end to racial profiling, and respect for human dignity in the criminal justice system. The Church has a unique opportunity to collectively advocate for the principles that are inherent to its identity: justice, equality, and fairness for every human being as a mandate from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

TWT



The Whole Truth

CHURCH SPOTLIGHT

Senior Pastor
Elisha Demerson

EMMANUEL TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST AMARILLO, TEXAS

By Elder Kyle Huckins, PhD

"G

od equips us with everything we need to be successful, but it's up to us to put into action those skills, visions and tools to achieve that success," says Elisha Demerson, senior pastor of Emmanuel Temple Church of God in Christ in Amarillo, Texas. "We have to exercise faith and believe God who created the heavens and the earth."

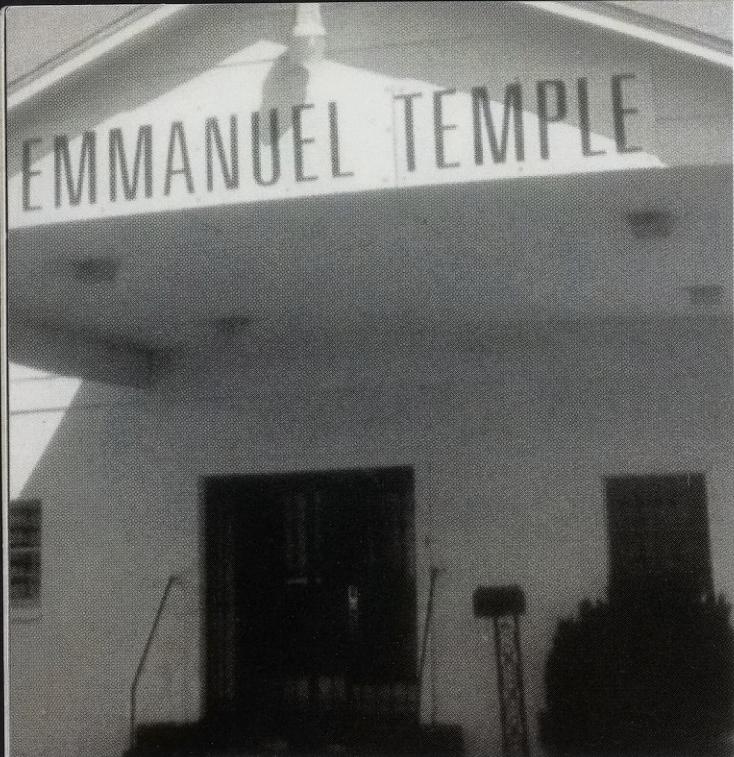
Demerson used these precepts to energize his run for the Amarillo City Council this year and became the first African-American elected to the panel in the town's history. He previously made similar political firsts in serving as county judge and county commissioner.

"One of the reasons I continue to pursue service outside the church is to show people of faith that God uses us in many areas," he explains.

This willingness to break new ground extends to his emphasis in ministry. He likes to reach out to whites and other races, as well as take in those in difficult circumstances not necessarily corresponding to the ideal.

First Assistant Pastor Bowden Jones, Jr. has caught the vision and seen it transform Emmanuel Temple, which he started attending as a sixth-grader a quarter-century ago. "A lot of times when people are hurting, they just need to be ministered to and come to church looking for that," says the First Capital Bank Texas vice president. "Traditionally, we told them things like, 'You need to get that right before you come before God!' Well, if we could get ourselves together, we wouldn't need God!"

Emmanuel Temple sits on the southern edge of North Amarillo, at the same address since the church's founding by Elder H.W. and First Lady Thelonia Cortez in 1951. Demerson came as pastor in 1988, inheriting a congregation composed almost entirely of children and senior citizens. Sunday-morning attendance has jumped from 25 then to perhaps 75 now, though it's been as high as 150 over the years.



"We focus on the family and emphasize the only way to have a healthy church is to have healthy families,"

Demerson recounts of his teaching to his congregation. "I encourage families to spend time together. I give them permission to miss church, too. Sometimes you need to hang out with your family."

The pastor-politician's top two planks in his recent City Council campaign focused on infrastructure and safety. He told voters he wanted to upgrade water lines and other services so that the whole city would meet modern standards, and hire enough law enforcement officers to ensure all parts of town would be adequately protected at all times.

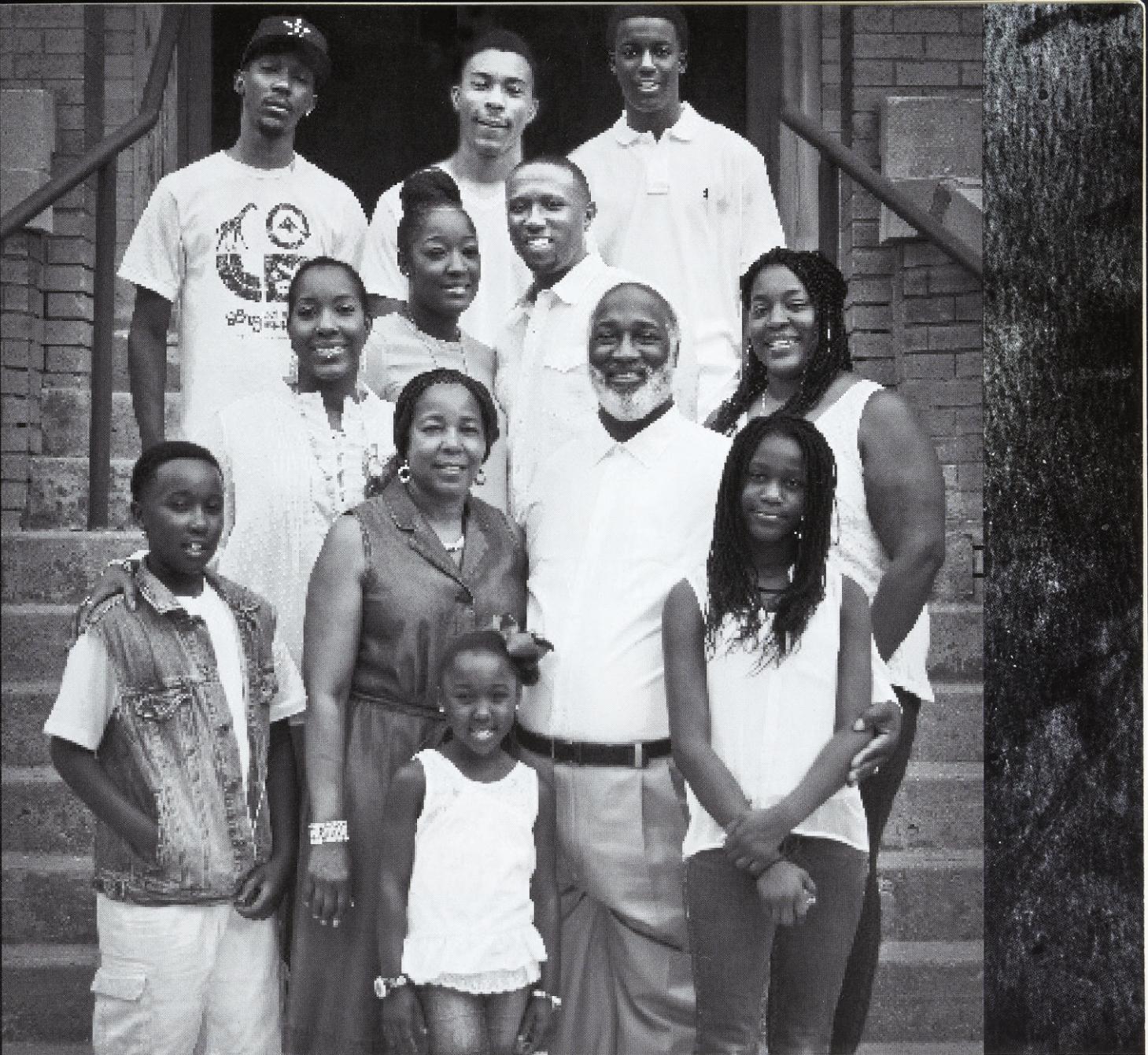
Second Assistant Pastor Charles McDuffie, 50, a prison warden, agrees with the idea of a safe public, as well as guaranteeing the Word is handled with integrity. He describes his teaching style during Wednesday-night sessions at Emmanuel Temple as "straight biblical."

"What attracted me to the church is the love. It's so overwhelming, the love, when you get here," McDuffie says. "For those traveling through, if there's a need, sometimes an individual who doesn't even go here will come here because they know us." He attests that the benevolence ministry is an important part of the congregation's outreach.

The church has Sunday School classes for various ages, a youth service, Mothers' Board, Praise and Worship team mixing traditional and modern gospel music, and Missions Department that holds free community dinners and gives out clothes to those needing help facing the Texas Panhandle's weather, which can get cold and snowy in winter.

"We've been focusing a bit more on giving, and being like Jesus, not just having church to be having church, but ministering to folks," Jones says.

2015 Councilmen



Emmanuel Temple's youth program uses a variety of methods to reach youngsters, including Bible studies, skits, songs, dinners and block parties. The group has its own building, the Youth Center, which at roughly 35 feet by 65 feet is similar in size to the church sanctuary structure.

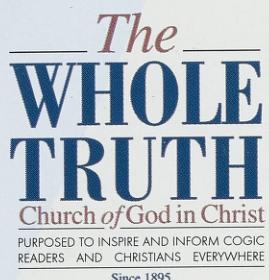
Demerson's brother Elijah also is a COGIC pastor in town, and the two were the first twins to go to school together at West Point. However, their growing up wasn't easy.

"We were the profile of kids that were supposed to fail," Elisha Demerson says. Their father died when they were 12, leaving behind a dozen children to be raised by a single mother who never again dated, let alone remarried.

She instilled "high Christian values" in her boys, and that they be "responsible young men," the Emmanuel Temple pastor recalls. That responsibility shows up in his 42 years of marriage to First Lady Bobbie Demerson, as well as his desire to minister outside of the four walls of the church.

"A life of service doesn't always mean you or your church gets credit," he says. "It means serving humankind." **TWT**

Kyle Huckins, an ordained elder in the Church of God in Christ, is a journalism professor and professional feature writer, columnist and editor. His book of columns on faith, "Getting From Here to Eternity: A Spirit-filled View of the News," is available at www.gettingfromheretoeternity.com, which also has his blog and other latest writings.



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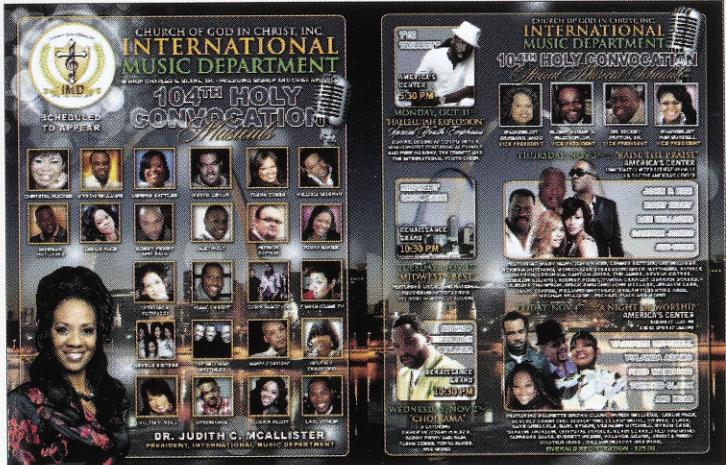


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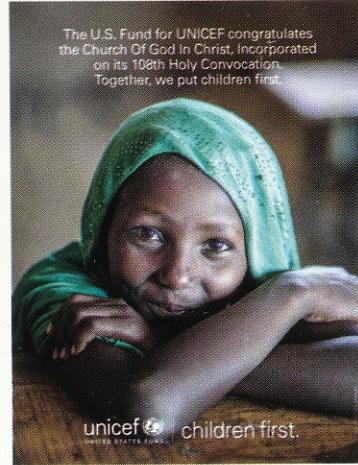
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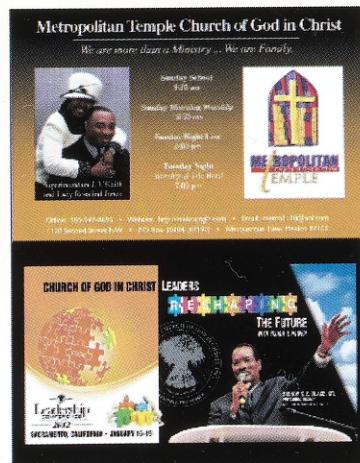
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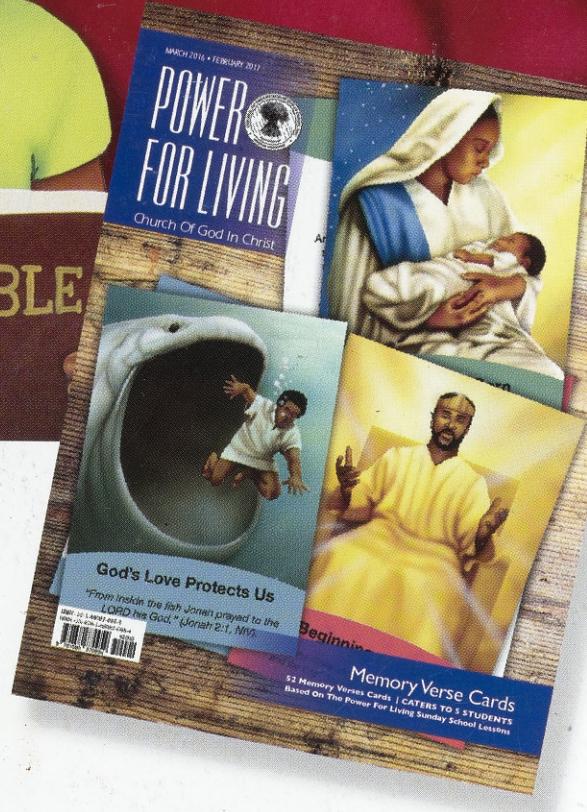
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